

[My personal best of]

# **JEFFERSON LIES**

**Exposing the Myths You've  
Always Been Believed about  
Thomas Jefferson**

**by DAVID BARTON**

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# INTRODUCTION: Rediscovering Thomas Jefferson

- Alexis de Tocqueville, historian and political leader who penned the famous *Democracy in America* as a result of his visit to America in 1831, called Jefferson “the greatest [man] whom the democracy of America has as yet produced.”

Perhaps the best summation was given by President John F. Kennedy, who once quipped to a group of Nobel Prize winners dining with him at the White House:

I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone. Someone once said that Thomas Jefferson was a gentleman of 32 who could calculate an eclipse, survey an estate, tie an artery, plan an edifice, try a cause, break a horse, and dance the minuet.

Jefferson was a remarkable man, and it is an understatement to say that his positive influence was enormous. He indisputably helped shape America for the better, and he exerted a positive influence on nations across the world. Wherever tyranny is opposed and freedom pursued, Jefferson and his words are held forth as the embodiment of liberty and limited government—a fact especially reaffirmed in the latter part of the twentieth century.

For example, Chinese students who strove to force democratic reforms under their totalitarian government regularly invoked Jefferson, even as the world watched the Communist tyrants massacre those students at Tiananmen Square.

When Czechoslovakians rose to throw off forty years of Soviet Communist tyranny, Czech leader Zdenek Janicek quoted Jefferson and his words to encourage the revolting Czech workers, and after Vaclav Havel became the first president of the freed Czech Republic, he, too, pointed to Jefferson and his governing philosophy as the standard for his new nation.

During Poland’s struggle for independence from the Soviet Union, Jefferson was invoked so often that award-winning Polish author Jerzy Kosinski observed, “In every Pole, there is Jefferson more than anyone else.”

Reform-minded Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev spoke openly of Jefferson’s positive influence upon him, explaining: “For myself, I found one thing to be true: having once begun a dialogue with Jefferson, one continues the conversation with him forever.”

When the Soviet Union fell in 1991 and Russia became free from its Communist oppressors, Andrei Kozyrev, the foreign minister of the new Russian republic, openly acknowledged that he was indebted to Jefferson and his governing philosophy.

This pattern has been repeated around the globe. As former prime minister of England Lady Margaret Thatcher affirmed, “[I]n the history of liberty, he’s a great figure everywhere in the world.”

Jefferson and his ideas of liberty, freedom, limited government, and God-given inalienable rights literally changed the world, and historians across the generations consistently praised his contributions and influence.

American history presents few names to its students more attractive and distinguished than that of Thomas Jefferson, and rarely has a single individual, in civil station, acquired such an ascendancy over the feelings and actions of a people.

—BENSON LOSSING, 1848

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 148-182). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Regrettably, this once universal praise of Jefferson has diminished in recent years. Mention Jefferson today and most Americans who have been through American history classes since the 1960s will retort, “Yeah, he may have done some of those things, but he was also a racist and a bigot—a slaveholder. And he slept with his fourteen-year-old slave Sally Hemings and made her pregnant. And he hated religion so much that he founded the first secular university in America, even writing his own Bible from which he cut out scriptures with which he disagreed.”

Why can today’s Americans list so many negatives about Jefferson but so few positives?

The answer is found in five twentieth-century practices that now dominate the study of American history and its heroes: Deconstructionism, Poststructuralism, Modernism, Minimalism, and Academic Collectivism. Although these five *isms* might suggest that an ivory-tower discussion is about to commence, this is not the case.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 212-220). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## **Deconstructionism**

The first of the five methods by which Jefferson (and most traditional history) has been impugned is *Deconstructionism*. Deconstructionism “tends to deemphasize or even efface [malign and smear] the subject” by posing “a continuous critique” to “lay low what was once high.” It “tear[s] down the old certainties upon which Western Culture is founded” and the foundations on which those beliefs are based. In short, Deconstructionism is a steady flow of belittling and negative portrayals of Western heroes, beliefs, values, and institutions. Deconstructionists make their living by telling only part of the story and spinning it negatively, manipulating others into supporting their views and objectives.

Deconstruction of American heroes, values, and institutions—which especially occurs in today’s classrooms—is the reason most Americans can recite more of what’s wrong with our nation than what’s right. They can identify every wart that has ever appeared on the face of America over the past four centuries, but not what has made America the envy of every people in the world—every people, that is, except Americans.

...

Under Deconstructionism students are similarly taught about the “intolerant” Christian Puritans who conducted the infamous witch trials. And while twenty-seven individuals died in the Massachusetts witch trials, almost universally ignored is the fact that witch trials were occurring across the world at that time; in Europe, 500,000 were put to death, including 30,000 in England, 75,000 in France, and 100,000 in Germany. Additionally, the American witch trials lasted eighteen months, but the European trials lasted years.

... deaths in America but 500,000 in Europe? Why emphasize the twenty-seven but ignore the 500,000? The answer is “Deconstructionism”—presenting a negative portrayal of American faith and values.

...

In short, Deconstructionists happily point out everything that can possibly be portrayed as a flaw—even if they have to distort information to do so—but they remain conspicuously silent about the multitude of reasons to be proud of America and its many successes and heroes. They have led Americans toward knowing everything that “lays low” American traditions, values, and heroes but virtually nothing that honors or affirms them.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 225-259). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

### ***Poststructuralism***

The second historical device for attacking and pulling down what is traditionally honored is called *Poststructuralism*. Poststructuralism is marked “by a rejection of totalizing, essentialist, foundationalist concepts” such as the reality of truth or “the will of God.” Poststructuralism discards absolutes and is “a-historical” (that is, non- or anti-historical), believing that nothing transcendent can be learned from history. Instead, meaning must be constructed by each individual for him- or herself, and historical meanings may shift and change based on an individual’s personal views. . . . In the past, America was characterized by the Latin phrase on the Great Seal of the United States: ***E Pluribus Unum***, meaning “out of many, one.” This acknowledges that although there was much diversity in America, there was a common unity that overcame all differences. But Poststructuralism reverses that emphasis to become *E Unum Pluribus*—that is, “out of one, many,” dividing the nation into separate groups and components with no unifying commonality between them. In short, Poststructuralism ignores traditional national unifying structures, values, heroes, and institutions and instead substitutes personally constructed ones.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 260-274). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

### ***American Exceptionalism***

Regrettably the greatest casualty of the joint influence of Deconstructionism and Poststructuralism is American Exceptionalism—the belief that America is blessed and enjoys unprecedented stability, prosperity, and liberty as a result of the institutions and policies produced by unique ideas such as God-given inalienable rights, individualism, limited government, full republicanism, and an educated and virtuous citizenry.

Americans are blessed. America is an exceptional nation. That exceptionalism encompasses her great diversity of race, ethnicity, and religion, and it has benefited every American. But now, following several decades of Deconstruction and Poststructural indoctrination in education and politics, American Exceptionalism is no longer recognized, understood, or venerated. To the contrary, many American political officials now feel compelled to apologize to the world for America; they are conscious of our flaws but seem ignorantly oblivious to our matchless benefits and opportunities.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 276-283). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

### ***Modernism***

A third common attack device is *Modernism*, which examines historical events and persons as if they occurred and lived today rather than in the past. It severs history from its context and setting, misrepresenting historical beliefs and events.

. . . Modernists assume that everything is static—that as it is today, so it was then, but to accurately portray history, each group or individual must be measured not by today’s modes of thinking, customs, and usage but rather by the context of their own times.

This is not to say that there is no absolute truth or that historical eras, movements, and individuals should not be judged by the immutable standards of right and wrong that transcend all generations—the standards that Jefferson and the Founding Fathers described in the Declaration of Independence. Indeed, all must be judged by immutable objective standards, as “the laws of nature and of nature’s God.” But just because those in previous generations often saw through a glass darkly does not mean they can be dismissed out of hand. Yet this is invariably what occurs when history is presented through the filter of Modernism. Too often today, Jefferson’s life is wrongly judged and critiqued as if he were living now rather than two centuries ago—a practice that produces many flawed conclusions.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 288-304). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

### ***Minimalism***

The fourth modern device used today is *Minimalism*, which is an unreasonable insistence on oversimplification—on reducing everything to monolithic causes and linear effects. Minimalism is easily recognizable in political campaign rhetoric: candidates take behemoth problems facing the nation—complicated difficulties that often have been decades in the making—and reduce them to one-line platitudes and campaign slogans. Minimalism is also apparent in the modern portrayal of history.

Our modern culture insists on easy answers, but the life of Jefferson does not accommodate that demand. He was an extremely complicated individual, not a man to be flippantly stereotyped or compartmentalized. . . . Minimalists portray Jefferson only as a racist, atheist, secularist, or whatever else they believe will help their agenda.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 306-319). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

### ***Academic Collectivism***

The fifth and final device that undermines historical accuracy is *Academic Collectivism*, whereby writers and scholars quote each other and those from their peer group rather than consult original sources. This destructive and harmful tendency now dominates the modern academic world, with a heavy reliance on peer review as the almost exclusive standard for historical truth.

An excellent, if chilling example of this historical malpractice is evident in a book called ***The Godless Constitution***. In that work, Cornell professors Isaac Kramnick and Laurence Moore assert that the Founding Fathers were a group of atheists, agnostics, and deists who deliberately set out to create a secular government. This text has become a staple in many universities across the country; law reviews, courts, and other professors now cite this work as an authoritative source to “prove” the Founding Fathers’ lack of religious belief. Strikingly, however, at the end of the book, where footnotes customarily appear, the professors candidly acknowledge that “we have dispensed with the usual scholarly apparatus of footnotes.”

What a startling admission by two so-called academics with PhDs! They make sweeping and forceful claims about a supposed lack of faith among the Founding Fathers, and their peers in academia herald this book as a great scholarly achievement. But there is not a single academic citation in the book to any original source or primary document. Not even a student at a community junior college would be permitted to submit a research paper with the same lack of primary source documentation, but somehow it is acceptable for professors at a noted academic institution to do so in a nationally published book.

This type of “peer review” is incestuous, with one scholar quoting another, each recirculating the other’s views, but with none of them consulting sources or ideas outside his or her own academic gene pool. The presence of a PhD after one’s name today somehow suggests academic infallibility—but this view must change if truth, accuracy, and objectivity are ever again to govern the presentation of history and historical figures. Primary source documents and historical evidence are the proper standard for historical truth, not professors’ opinions.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 320-339). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

# Lie #1: Thomas Jefferson Fathered Sally Hennings' Children

In 1998 the journal *Science* released the results of a DNA inquiry into whether Jefferson had fathered any children through his slave Sally Hemings, specifically her first child, Thomas, or her fifth child, Eston. In conjunction with the announcement, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Professor Joseph Ellis wrote an accompanying article in the journal *Nature* declaring that the question was now settled—that DNA testing had conclusively proved that Thomas Jefferson had indeed fathered a Hemings child, thus scientifically affirming a two-centuries-old rumor.

That 1998 announcement concerning early American history was actually relevant to events occurring at the time, for it came at the commencement of President Bill Clinton's impeachment proceedings for lying under oath to a grand jury about his sexual activities with a young intern inside the Oval Office. News reports immediately pounced on the fortuitous DNA announcement, arguing that if a man as great as Thomas Jefferson had engaged in sexual trysts, then President Clinton should not face questions about his sexual misbehavior. After all, such conduct had not diminished the stature of Jefferson, they argued, so it should not be allowed to weaken that of Clinton.

...

As far as Clinton defenders were concerned (especially his supporters in the media), the announcement of Jefferson's alleged moral failings was a gift from heaven. The entire nation was bombarded with the Jefferson paternity story for weeks; and the news of his moral failings was burned deeply into the consciousness of Americans. But many groups beyond Clinton supporters also welcomed the test results as useful to their particular agendas.

...

Another movement that benefited from the Jefferson-Hemings story included those who wished to keep open the racial wounds of previous generations. They pointed to Jefferson and his sexual exploitation of the slave Hemings as proof of how all African Americans were treated by *all* white Americans, not only in Jefferson's day, but also throughout much of the rest of American history. The Jefferson announcement rekindled demands for restitutionary policies that would provide preferential treatment and elevation of status and opportunity as repayment for past wrongs committed.

However, only eight weeks after the initial blockbuster DNA story was issued, it was retracted quietly and without fanfare, with the scientific researcher who had conducted the DNA test announcing that it actually had not proven that Jefferson fathered any children with Hemings. But this news exonerating Jefferson did not make the same splash in the national headlines, for it aided no agenda being advanced at that time. Since doing justice to Jefferson's reputation was not deemed to be a worthy national consideration in and of itself, the retraction story was simply buried or ignored.

Consider the damage done by this false reporting. Ask any adult today whether it has been scientifically proven that Jefferson fathered illegitimate children with Hemings, and they will likely answer with a resounding "Yes!" The nation certainly heard and still remembers the news barrage following the initial report, but the silence surrounding its retraction was deafening.

Barton, David (2012-04-10). *The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson* (Kindle Locations 355-404). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.



### ***Category 1: The DNA Evidence***

The DNA evidence as originally presented by Professor Ellis and reported by the media had seemed both unassailable and irrefutable, but there were several critical facts in the report that most Americans never heard.

For example, the original 1998 report contained a significant finding about which scholars and the media remained conspicuously silent:

President Thomas Jefferson was accused of having fathered a child, Tom, by Sally Hemings. Tom was said to have been born in 1790, soon after Jefferson and Sally Hemings returned from France, where he had been minister. Present-day members of the African-American Woodson family believe that Thomas Jefferson was the father of Thomas Woodson, whose name comes from his later owner. . . . [But DNA testing shows] Thomas Woodson was not Thomas Jefferson's son. (emphasis added)

So, the longest rumored charge against Jefferson, originally printed two centuries ago in publications of the day, was now proven wrong. Jefferson had been completely exonerated of that longstanding claim.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 475-485). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

The researchers found that the configuration of the Y chromosomes in the descendants of Field Jefferson—a general configuration common to the entire Jefferson family—was indeed present in the descendants of Sally Hemings' youngest child, Eston. Therefore, on the basis of DNA testing, the most that researchers could conclusively say was that *some* Jefferson male—and there were twenty-six Jefferson males living in the area at the time—had a relationship with Sally Hemings that resulted in the birth of Eston. But which Jefferson was it?

A distinguished commission of noted authorities was convened to examine the matter, and it concluded:

There are at least ten possible fathers for Sally Hemings' children who could have passed down genetic material that might produce children physically resembling Thomas Jefferson and who are thought to have visited Monticello regularly during the years Sally Hemings was having children.

After investigating the ten possible fathers, the group concluded that the “case against some of Thomas Jefferson's relatives appears significantly stronger than the case against him.” It was these other nine unaddressed paternity alternatives that made the DNA testing announcement suspect. Thomas Jefferson's own DNA was not checked, and with the exception of Field Jefferson, the DNA was not checked for the rest of the Jefferson males living in the area. *World* therefore correctly reported:

According to the genetic evidence, the father *could* have been Jefferson. Or it *could* have been his brother Randolph. Or one of Randolph's sons. Or, presumably, his uncle Field, or his son George or one of his sons. . . . Any of these men had access to Monticello and could have been culpable. (emphasis added)

National columnist Mona Charen accurately summarized the scope of the testing results:

The DNA data did rule Jefferson out as the father of Thomas Woodson, the eldest of Sally's sons, and shed no light on the rest. That leaves a scenario in which Jefferson's sexual liaison with his slave [that produced Eston] is estimated to have begun when he was 65 years old. Possible certainly, but likely? While the DNA data adds to our knowledge—it is clear that there was mixing of Hemings and Jefferson genes sometime in the past 200

years—they do not provide names or dates. They most definitely do not “prove” anything about Thomas Jefferson himself.

Herbert Barger, the Jefferson family historian and genealogist who assisted in the DNA testing, explained:

My study indicates to me that Thomas Jefferson was NOT the father of Eston or any other Hemings child. The DNA study . . . indicates that Randolph [Thomas’ younger brother] is possibly the father of Eston and maybe the others. . . . [T]hree of Sally Hemings’ children, Harriet, Beverly, and Eston (the latter two not common names), were given names of the *Randolph* family. (emphasis added)

Significantly, a blue-ribbon commission of thirteen leading scholars was assembled to examine the Jefferson paternity issue. Those scholars were all PhDs, and most were department heads from schools such as Harvard, the University of Virginia, the University of North Carolina, the University of Kentucky, Indiana University, and others. The group was not composed of Jefferson supporters; in fact, many believed that Jefferson might indeed be the father of Hemings’ children. But after spending a year investigating the evidence, they *all* concluded that Randolph was indeed the most likely father, . . .

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 494-527). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

We don’t know exactly when Randolph’s first wife died, but we do know that he remarried—to a very controlling woman—shortly after Eston Hemings was born. About the same time, Thomas Jefferson retired from public office and spent the rest of his life at Monticello, where he could presumably have had access to Sally Hemings any night he wished. But Sally, although only in her mid-thirties, gave birth to no known children after Eston was born in 1808. Even the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation report acknowledges that Sally’s childbearing years may have corresponded to the years in which Randolph Jefferson was a widower.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 544-549). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . Dr. Eugene Foster, who conducted the DNA testing, had been very clear about the limitations of his testing, but his findings were misrepresented by Joseph Ellis, historian and professor at Mt. Holyoke College. Ellis, who opposed what was happening to President Clinton at the time, had written the sensationalistic “announcement” for *Nature*, but his personal spin went well beyond Foster’s scientific findings, making the story both inaccurate and unfactual. Perhaps this should not be surprising; four years later, in 2002, it was revealed that Ellis was also guilty of publicly lying to his classes on many occasions. (For example, he told students that he went to Vietnam as a platoon leader and paratrooper in the 101st Airborne and served on General Westmoreland’s staff during the war; he did neither. He also said that he did active civil rights work in Mississippi during the Civil Rights Movement and was harassed by the state police for his efforts; again, neither was true. He claimed that he scored the winning touchdown in the last football game of his senior year in high school; it turns out he wasn’t even on the team.) As one columnist properly queried, “How can you trust a historian who makes up history?”

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 555-563). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In short, the DNA testing did not show Jefferson to be guilty of *any* sexual liaison with Hemings. The so-called smoking gun turned out to be a waterlogged pea shooter.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 570-571). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## ***Category 2: The Evidence of Oral Tradition***

The second source of Hemings' evidence used against Jefferson is oral tradition, but the DNA findings significantly weakened this source. The strongest evidence in this category had long been the two-century-old charge that Jefferson had fathered Thomas Woodson, but the DNA findings were conclusive that no Jefferson—not any of the twenty-six Jefferson males—had fathered Woodson. That original test was later repeated by Dr. Foster with the same results. Consequently, that oral tradition is now authoritatively disproved. (Incidentally, DNA testing has been conducted on descendants from two of Hemings' five children. As already noted, testing on the Thomas Woodson branch was negative for any Jefferson genes. . . .

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 572-578). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

The other major oral tradition challenging Jefferson's sexual morality came from Sally Hemings' son Madison (the fourth Hemings child, born in 1805). In an article published in an Ohio newspaper in 1873, Madison Hemings claimed that in France "my mother became Mr. Jefferson's concubine, and when he was called back home she was enceinte [pregnant] by him" with Thomas Woodson. But the DNA testing disproved two of Madison's major claims: (1) there were no Jefferson genes in Sally's first child, Thomas; therefore, (2) Sally did not return home pregnant by Jefferson.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 581-585). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Sadly, when someone dismisses Madison Hemings' claims because of their many provable and obvious inaccuracies, writers such as Gordon-Reed cry "Racism!" and lament that black witnesses from history are automatically given less credence. Other writers such as Jan Lewis and Peter Onuf believe that those who do not accept the testimony of Madison Hemings *carte blanche* are simply racists. Such irrational refusals to consider the substantial evidence that contradicts Madison Hemings' claims indicates that personal predilections and political agendas have been placed above an honest search for the truth. Genuine scholars require verifiable documentation—something completely lacking in the case of Thomas Woodson's and Madison Hemings' oral testimonies. In fact, their oral testimonies are factually disprovable, which eliminates the second category of "evidence" used to "prove" Jefferson's paternity through Hemings.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 604-612). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## ***Category 3: The Charges Published Two Centuries Ago***

History has proved many of Callender's charges against Jefferson to be totally inaccurate. For example, in his initial article in which he first "revealed" the Jefferson-Hemings "affair," Callender had asserted:

It is well known that the man whom it delighteth the people to honor [President Jefferson] keeps, and for many years past has kept as his concubine one of his own slaves. Her name is Sally. The name of her eldest son is Tom. His features are said to bear a striking, although sable [dark-skinned] resemblance to those of the president himself. The boy is ten or twelve years of age. His mother went to France in the same vessel with Mr. Jefferson.

This story was widely circulated, and the “striking resemblance” hearsay was often repeated to point to Jefferson’s guilt. For example, the 1802 *Frederick-Town Herald* declared:

Other information assures us that Mr. Jefferson’s Sally and their children are real persons. . . . Her son, whom Callender calls president Tom, we also are assured, bears a strong likeness to Mr. Jefferson.

Interestingly, the “striking resemblance” charge is still invoked today as “proof” that Jefferson fathered Hemings’ children, but since the recent DNA testing unequivocally proved that Sally’s son Tom was not the son of Thomas Jefferson, Callender’s allegations that Tom bore a “striking resemblance to the president himself” are completely meaningless.

Furthermore, Callender claimed that Jefferson and Sally “went to France on the same vessel,” which was also wrong; they went on two separate vessels, one in 1784 and the other in 1787. Callender made many other similarly erroneous claims.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 706-722). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

The charges Callender made against Washington, Adams, and Madison were so ridiculous that they were never believed by objective historians—or, for that matter, by thoughtful citizens. So why, then, have Callender’s charges against Jefferson survived when his charges against all the others deservedly perished long ago?

Because a few Deconstructionist writers in recent years have revived the work of Callender (called the “single poisoned spring” of Jefferson history), citing his allegations against Jefferson as if they were indisputably proved while failing to mention Callender’s established and well-documented pattern of false reporting, as well as the scurrilous, self-serving motives behind his published accusations. As Pulitzer Prize-winning historian James Truslow Adams explained, “Almost every scandalous story about Jefferson which is still whispered or believed can be traced to the lies in Callender’s book.”

Merrill Peterson, professor of history at the University of Virginia, holds the same opinion, and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Dumas Malone described Callender as “one of the most notorious scandalmongers and character assassins in American history.” Stanford University historian John C. Miller describes Callender as “the most unscrupulous scandalmonger of the day . . . a journalist who stopped at nothing and stooped to anything.” He explains:

Callender made his charges against Jefferson without fear and without research. He had never visited Monticello; he had never spoken to Sally Hemings; and he never made the slightest effort to verify the “facts” he so stridently proclaimed. It was “journalism” at its most reckless, wildly irresponsible, and scurrilous. Callender was not an investigative journalist; he never bothered to investigate anything. For him, the story, especially if it reeked of scandal, was everything; truth, if it stood in his way, was summarily mowed down.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 741-758). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Jefferson knew that he could never rebut the falsehoods as rapidly as they could be concocted. So long before Callender leveled his charges against him, Jefferson had made it his standing personal policy to ignore all ridiculous claims made against him by his enemies.

He gave three reasons for this policy: First, any response he made might seem to dignify the charges. Second, he was convinced that his personal integrity would eventually prevail over the false accusations made against him. And third, Jefferson trusted the good judgment of the people.

Jefferson acknowledged that he could have successfully taken libelers like Callender to court, but he refused to lower himself to that level, instead turning them over to the Judge of the universe to Whom they would eventually answer. As he explained:

I know that I might have filled the courts of the United States with actions for these slanders, and have ruined perhaps many persons who are not innocent. But this would be no equivalent to the loss of [my own] character [by retaliating against them]. I leave them, therefore, to the reproof of their own consciences. If these do not condemn them, there will yet come a day when the false witness will meet a judge Who has not slept over his slanders.

Amazingly, Jefferson's lifelong policy of refusing to answer false claims has today been translated into culpatory evidence against him. In fact, one prominent national news outlet pointed out that since Jefferson "never directly denied" having an affair with Sally, it was proof that he *had* fathered her children! (Consider the unreasonableness of declaring that an individual is guilty of whatever he does not deny.)

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 773-789). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In summary, there exists no evidence, either modern or ancient, that Thomas Jefferson fathered even one child with Sally Hemings, much less five. In fact, if Jefferson were alive today and if he were charged with a crime for allegedly having sex with the young Hemings, it would be an open-and-shut case: he would be acquitted.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 865-867). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## LIE #2: Thomas Jefferson Founded a Secular University

Jefferson was involved in many educational endeavors, but his greatest, and certainly the one dearest to his heart, was his founding of the University of Virginia. If one accepts the modern mischaracterization that Jefferson was antireligious and hostile to Christianity, it then becomes logical to assert that he would promote the secular and oppose the religious in his educational endeavors—especially at his beloved university.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 870-873). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Jefferson was born in 1743. As a youngster he attended the Anglican St. James' Church of Northam Parish with his family. The church was pastored by the Reverend William Douglass, and from 1752 to 1758 Jefferson attended the Reverend Douglass' school. In 1758 his family moved to Albemarle County and attended the Anglican Fredericksville Parish Church, pastored by the Reverend James Fontaine Maury, and from 1758 to 1760 Jefferson attended the Reverend Maury's school. In 1760, after having been trained in religious schools, the seventeen-year-old Jefferson entered William and Mary, another religious school directly affiliated with the Anglican Church.

Part of Jefferson's daily routine at the college included morning and evening prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer* with lengthy Scripture readings. Scottish instructor Dr. William Small, the son of a Presbyterian minister, was Jefferson's favorite instructor. Jefferson later acknowledged: "It was my great good fortune, and what probably fixed the destinies of my life, that Dr. William Small of Scotland, was then professor."

Interestingly, many of the best instructors in early America were Scottish clergymen. As noted historian George Marsden affirmed, "[I]t is not much of an exaggeration to say that outside of New England, the Scots were the educators of eighteenth-century America." These Scottish instructors regularly tutored students in what was known as the Scottish Common Sense philosophy—a method under which not only Jefferson but also other notable Virginia Founding Fathers were trained, including George Washington, James Madison, George Mason, Peyton Randolph, Richard Henry Lee, and Thomas Nelson. Gaillard Hunt, head of the manuscript division of the Library of Congress, reported:

One reason why the ruling class in Virginia acted with such unanimity [during the Revolution] . . . was that a large proportion of them had received the same kind of education. This usually came first from clergymen.

The Scottish Common Sense approach was developed by the Reverend Thomas Reid (1710–1796) to counter the skepticism of stridently secular European writers and philosophers such as Hume, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Malby. Reid's approach argued that common sense should shape philosophy rather than philosophy shaping common sense. He asserted that normal, everyday language could express philosophical principles in a way that could be understood by ordinary individuals rather than just so-called elite thinkers and philosophers. The principle tenets of Scottish Common Sense philosophy were straightforward:

1. There is a God
2. God placed into every individual a conscience—a moral sense written on his or her heart (cf. Jeremiah 31:33; Romans 2:14–15; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16; etc.)

3. God established “first principles” in areas such as law, government, education, politics, and economics, and these first principles could be discovered by the use of common sense
4. There is no conflict between reason and revelation. Both come directly from God,

This was the philosophy under which Jefferson was educated at William and Mary. . . .

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 900-928). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

So if secular Enlightenment writers were not a primary force in shaping Jefferson’s thinking, then who was? Jefferson himself answered that question, declaring that “Bacon, Newton and Locke . . . [are] my trinity of the three greatest men the world had ever produced.”

Francis Bacon, a British philosopher, attorney, and statesman, called the “Father of Modern Science,” is known for developing the process of inductive thinking and creating the scientific method. Historians have declared that “[T]he intellect of Bacon was one of the most powerful and searching ever possessed by man.” Bacon was by no means secular; rather, he was quite the opposite. In his noted work *De Interpretatione Naturae Prooemium* (1603), he declared that his threefold goal was to discover truth, serve his country, and serve the church. He asserted that the vigorous pursuit of truth would always lead one directly to God:

[A] little philosophy inclineth man’s mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s minds about to religion.

Bacon was famous for penning many religious works, including *Essays, Ten in Number, Combined with Sacred Meditations and the Colors of Good and Evil* (1597); *The Proficiencies and Advancement of Learning, Divine and Human* (1605); *On the Unity in Religion* (1612); *On Atheism* (1612); *Of Praise* (1612); as well as a translation of some of the psalms (1625). This outspoken and famous Christian writer and philosopher who never separated God or religion from science or government was the first of Jefferson’s triumvirate of the world’s greatest individuals.

The second in his list was Isaac Newton, an English statesman, mathematician, and scientist, credited with birthing modern calculus and discovering the laws of universal gravitation. Newton did extensive work in physics, astronomy, and optics and was the first scientist to be knighted for his work. Strikingly, however:

He spent more time on theology than on science; indeed, he wrote about 1.3 million words on Biblical subjects. . . . Newton’s understanding of God came primarily from the Bible, which he studied for days and weeks at a time. . . . Newton’s theology profoundly influenced his scientific method. . . . His God was not merely a philosopher’s impersonal First Cause; He was the God in the Bible Who freely creates and rules the world, Who speaks and acts in history.

Among Newton’s many theological works were his *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (1733) and *Notes on Early Church History* (c. 1680) among many others. And throughout his scientific works, Newton also maintained a distinctly Biblical Creationist view—such as in his 1687 *Principia* (considered “the greatest scientific book ever written”) in which he stated:

This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. And if the fixed stars are the centres of other like systems, these, being formed by the like wise counsel, must be all subject to the dominion of One.

This Christian theologian and philosopher was the second of Jefferson's trinity of personal heroes.

The third was English philosopher and political theorist John Locke. Locke was intimately involved with politics in England and also played a large role in shaping America, including writing the 1669 constitution for the Carolina Colony. He also penned numerous works on education, philosophy, government, empiricism, and religion.

Today's writers frequently describe Locke as a deist (or at least a follower of an early form of deism), but historians of earlier generations described him as a Christian theologian. After all, Locke wrote a verse-by-verse commentary on Paul's Epistles and also compiled a topical Bible, called a *Common Place-Book to the Holy Bible*, that listed verses by subject for easy study reference. And when antireligionists attacked Christianity, Locke defended it in his book *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures* (1695). When attacks continued, Locke responded with *A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) and then with *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* (1697). Furthermore, in his *Two Treatises of Government* (1689)—the work specifically relied upon by Jefferson and the other Founders as they drafted the Declaration—Locke invoked the Bible over 1,500 times.

Jefferson studied not only Locke's governmental and legal writings but also his theological texts. His own personal summation of Locke's view of Christianity clearly shows that he definitely did not consider Locke to be a deist. According to Jefferson:

Locke's system of Christianity is this: Adam was created happy & immortal. . . . By sin he lost this so that he became subject to total death (like that of brutes [animals]) to the crosses & unhappiness of this life. At the intercession however of the Son of God this sentence was in part remitted. . . . And moreover to them who believed their faith was to be counted for righteousness [Romans 4:3, 5]. Not that faith without works was to save them; St. James, chapter 2 says expressly the contrary [v. 14–26]. . . . So that a reformation of life (included under repentance) was essential, & defects in this would be made up by their faith; i.e. their faith should be counted for righteousness [Romans 4:3, 5]. . . . [A]dding a faith in God & His attributes that on their repentance He would pardon them [1 John 1:9]; they also would be justified [Romans 3:24]. This then explains the text "there is no other name under heaven by which a man may be saved" [Acts 4:12], i.e., the defects in good works shall not be supplied by a faith in Mahomet, Fo [i.e., Buddha], or any other except Christ.

Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke—each an outspoken Christian thinker and philosopher—were described by Jefferson as "the three greatest men the world has ever produced."

So, to the question of whether Jefferson rejected his own personal educational experience because it had been so thoroughly infused with religion, the answer is a clear "No!"

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (Kindle Locations 997-1055). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## **1. Was the University of Virginia Founded as a Secular University?**

Jefferson and his Board of Visitors (or regents) specifically founded the University of Virginia to be America's first transdenominational school—a school not affiliated with one specific denomination but rather one that would train students from all denominations. By so doing, Jefferson was actually implementing the plan advocated by evangelical Presbyterian clergyman Samuel Knox of Baltimore.



In 1799 the Reverend Knox penned a policy paper proposing the formation of a state university that would invite many denominations to establish multiple theological schools rather than just one, so they would work together in mutual Christian cooperation rather than competition. Jefferson agreed with Knox's philosophy, and it was this model that he employed at his University of Virginia. . . .

. . . Nearly forty years earlier in 1779, Jefferson had already demonstrated his affinity for this type of interdenominational cooperation and Christian nonpreferentialism in his famous Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, which disestablished the Anglican Church as the official denomination of Virginia and instead welcomed all denominations with equal legal standing.

. . . But many today wrongly misinterpret Jefferson's denominational nonpreferentialism to be secularism. . . .

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 45-46). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . when construction of the university began, the special ceremony at the laying of its cornerstone included both the reading of Scripture and a prayer—activities specifically arranged by Jefferson and the Board of Visitors. Notice the desires expressed in the university's founding prayer:

May Almighty God, without invocation to Whom no work of importance should be begun, bless this undertaking and enable us to carry it on with success. Protect this college, the object of which institution is to instill into the minds of youth principles of sound knowledge, to inspire them with the love of religion and virtue, and prepare them for filling the various situations in society with credit to themselves and benefit to their country. (emphasis added)

Clearly, then, Jefferson's own writings and the records of the university, along with the explanations given by ministers who supported the school, all absolutely refute any notion that the University of Virginia was a secular institution. Instead, it was the nation's first prominent transdenominational school.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 50). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## **2. Was Jefferson's Faculty Composed of Unitarians?**

Jefferson established ten teaching positions at the university, and *none* of the professors filling them was a Unitarian. . . .

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 50). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## **3. Was Jefferson Bar Religious Instruction from the Academic Program?**

In 1818 Jefferson and the university Visitors publicly released their plan for the new school. In addition to announcing that it would be transdenominational and that religious instruction would be provided to all students, Jefferson took further intentional steps to ensure that religious training would occur. For example, he directed the professor of ancient languages to teach Biblical Greek, Hebrew, and Latin to students so that they would be equipped to read and study the "earliest and most respected authorities of the faith of every sect [denomination]." Jefferson also wanted the writings of prominent Christian authorities to be placed in the university library. In August 1824 he asked Visitor (or regent) James Madison to prepare a list of Christian theological writings to be included on its shelves.

. . . He also included Latin authors such as Saint Augustine; the writings of Saint Aquinas and other Christian leaders from the Middle Ages; and the works of Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, Socinius, and Bellarmine from the Reformation era. Madison's list also contained more contemporary theologians and religious writers such as Grotius, Tillotson, Hooker, Pascal, Locke, Newton, Butler, Clarke, Wollaston, Edwards, Mather, Penn, Wesley, Leibnitz, Paley, and others.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 53-54). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Jefferson also approved of worship on campus, acknowledging "that a building . . . in the middle of the grounds may be called for in time in which may be rooms for religious worship."<sup>94</sup> He later ordered that in the university Rotunda, "one of its large elliptical rooms on its middle floor shall be used for . . . religious worship." He further declared that "the students of the university will be free and *expected* to attend religious worship at the establishment of their respective sects" (emphasis added).

Jefferson took many deliberate steps to ensure that religious instruction was an integral part of academic studies. Clearly, then, the claim that there was no Christian curriculum or instruction at the University of Virginia is demonstrably false and easily disproved by Jefferson's own writings.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 54). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

#### **4. Did the University of Virginia Have Chaplains?**

The University of Virginia did indeed have chaplains, albeit not in its first three years (the university opened for students in 1825). At the beginning, when the university was establishing its reputation as a transdenominational university, the school had no appointed chaplain for the same reason that there had been no clergyman as president and no single professor of divinity: an ordained clergyman in any of those three positions might send an incorrect signal that the university was aligned with a specific denomination. But by 1829, when the nondenominational reputation of the university had been fully established, President Madison (who became rector of the university after Jefferson's death in 1826) announced "that [permanent] provision for religious instruction and observance among the students would be made by . . . services of clergymen."

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 56). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . first-hand source documents, especially Jefferson's own writings, incontestably refute all four modern assertions about the alleged secular nature of the University of Virginia. . . . There is one other aspect of Jefferson's philosophy toward religion in education that draws much attention from those who would paint him as an irreligious, atheistic man. In a highly publicized letter to his nephew Peter Carr, Jefferson tells him to "question with boldness even the existence of a God." Taken out of context this admonition does seem condemning—which is why Deconstructionists and Minimalists have lifted just this one line from a very long Jefferson letter. They deliberately misrepresent the full letter in order to make it seem that Jefferson was recommending exactly the opposite of what he was actually telling his nephew.

In 1785, when Peter was fifteen years old and Jefferson was on an overseas assignment, he began to write Peter from Europe. He addressed the direction that the young man's education should take, instructing him not only about the importance of character ("give up science, give the earth itself and all it contains, rather than do an immoral act") but also about diligently pursuing the study of history, philosophy, and poetry.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 57-58). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . Jefferson advised Peter to "question with boldness even the existence of a God."

Secularist and antireligious authors have made this short phrase the sole focus of that long letter, but the rest of the letter makes abundantly clear that Jefferson was actually instructing Peter in apologetics. The term *apologetics* originated in 1733 and indicates an intelligent presentation and defense of major traditional elements of religious faith.

Jefferson believed that the time had come for the seventeen-year-old Peter to know not just what he believed but *why* he believed it—and to be able to defend his beliefs. Peter believed in God and Christianity, but Jefferson urged him to examine both sides of the question of the existence of God, study opposing arguments, and then come to a conclusion he could ably defend. (This is exactly what the Bible advises in 1 Peter 3:15: to be able to get the *reason* for one's belief.)

The Founding Fathers regularly encouraged their own children and other youth to learn and use apologetics, to learn *both* sides of a religious issue. . . .

Jefferson, by telling his nephew Peter to "question with boldness even the existence of a God," was doing exactly what the leading theologians and educators of his day similarly encouraged. Yet, for making the same recommendation made by prominent religious leaders, Jefferson is somehow proved today to be an antireligious secularist? Ridiculous.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 58-60). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . Question with boldness even the existence of a God, because if there be One, He must more approve the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear. . . .

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 61). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In summary, Jefferson's letter to Peter definitely does not prove irreligion on the part of Jefferson, nor can it be used to show Jefferson was promoting secular education among his own family members. Jefferson has a long record of deliberately, purposefully, and intentionally including religious instruction in all educational endeavors in which he took part, and this is especially true concerning his beloved University of Virginia.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 66). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## LIE #3: Thomas Jefferson Wrote His Own Bible and Edited Out the Things He Didn't Agree With

... Jefferson owned *many* Bibles, belonged to a Bible society and contributed to it, gave out copies of the full, unedited text of the traditional Bible, and assisted in publishing and distributing Bibles. In each of these situations, Jefferson had opportunity to indicate his personal displeasure with the Bible or at least to refrain from participating, but he did not do so.

...

There actually is *no* Jefferson Bible, but modern spin is usually directed at one of two religious works that Jefferson prepared about Jesus. He compiled the first in 1804 and the second around 1820. Jefferson assigned an explicit title to each, accurately describing its scope and purpose. Neither was a "Bible," and Jefferson would have strenuously objected to that characterization. In his mind each was nothing more than what he said it was in its title.

Jefferson's title for his 1804 work about Jesus was:

*The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth, being Extracted from the Account of His Life and Doctrines Given by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; Being an Abridgement of the New Testament for the Use of the Indians, Unembarrassed [Uncomplicated] with Matters of Fact or Faith beyond the Level of their Comprehensions.*

Notice several important points. First, this work was prepared for the use of Indians. Second, it was a work about Jesus drawn solely from the four Gospels. Third, it was not a Bible but rather an abridgment of the major doctrines of Jesus in the Gospels, and as will be seen below, it included many references to the miraculous and supernatural.

Barton, David (2012-04-10). *The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson* (pp. 69-70). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

It is a little-known fact that Jefferson spent literally decades of his life studying and comparing the moral teachings of dozens of history's most famous teachers and leaders, including Ocellus, Timæus, Pythagoras, Aristides, Cato, Socrates, Plato, Epicurus, Cicero, Xenophon, Seneca, Epictetus, Antoninus, and many others whose names are probably completely unknown to today's readers. Jefferson read and critiqued the moral teachings of each of these leaders and then compared them against the moral teachings of Jesus, finding those of Jesus to be far superior.

In today's shallow academic climate of Minimalism and Modernism, Jefferson's preoccupation with the study of morals seems eccentric and out of the ordinary. It is usually dismissed as nothing more than what critics consider to be a thinly veiled subterfuge masking his true hatred of the Bible. After all, those modern critics surely wouldn't have undertaken such an arduous study of morals across the millennia, so they can't imagine that Jefferson would have done so. But the subject of morality was indeed a genuine theme of concentrated academic inquiry—not only for Jefferson but for most Americans. It was even a required, stand-alone course in nearly every American university during the Founding Era.

Barton, David (2012-04-10). *The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson* (pp. 74-75). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

Jefferson believed that the moral teachings of Jesus needed nothing added from any other philosopher, whether Christian or Pagan. He declared:

The doctrines which flowed from the lips of Jesus Himself are within the comprehension of a child; but thousands of volumes have not yet explained the Platonisms [i.e., teachings of Plato] engrafted on them—and for this obvious reason: that nonsense can never be explained.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 78). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . in 1816, he {Jefferson} wrote Christian theologian and fellow Founding Father Charles Thomson, who had earlier produced the Septuigent (Greek translation) Bible that Jefferson so admired. Thomson had just published his famous *Synopsis of the Four Evangelists* in which he had taken all the passages from each of the four Gospels and arranged them chronologically. The result was something like one long Gospel with all Jesus' words and acts arranged sequentially.

Having seen Thomson's newest work, Jefferson told him of his own project—"a wee little book . . . which I call the Philosophy of Jesus; it is a paradigm [example] of His doctrines made by cutting the texts out of the book [the Bible], and arranging them on the pages of a blank book in a certain order of time or subject." Jefferson added, "If I had time, I would add to my little book the Greek, Latin, and French texts in columns side by side." (Jefferson read seven languages: Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, German, and English.) Four years later, in 1820, Jefferson did indeed add those languages and columns to his "wee little book," thus completing his *Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* as a four-language polyglot.

Today's critics of Jefferson who claim that this is the "Jefferson Bible" from which he excluded the supernatural are either ill informed or ill intentioned. Jefferson did not produce and had no intention of producing a theological work. Rather, it was a work in which he compiled some fifty different moral teachings of Jesus. But inexplicably, many of today's alleged scholars refuse to allow that work to be just what he said it was. Instead, they insist on converting it into a supposed Jefferson attack against the Bible and the supernatural.

...

Modern claims that Jefferson deleted the miraculous and supernatural, whether in reference to the 1804 or the 1820 work are erroneous. Neither of the two works fits the critics' description of the alleged "Jefferson Bible."

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 79-80). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

This, then, is another problem with the modern description that this work was a "Jefferson Bible." It was *not* for public use, and Jefferson would never have allowed it to have been described as a "Bible." It was only a personal assemblage of Jesus' moral teachings from the Gospels for his own study. So how did this private work—a work unknown even to his family—become public?

In 1886 Cyrus Adler, the librarian for the Smithsonian, located the original that had been in the hands of Jefferson's grandson and arranged for its purchase by Congress in 1895. In 1900 US representative John Lacey of Iowa was so inspired by Jefferson's compilation of the moral teachings of Jesus that he brought the work to national attention through a newspaper article widely reprinted across the country. In 1902 Lacey sponsored a congressional resolution that the government reprint *Jefferson's Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* for use by the nation's senators and representatives.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 81). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Congress passed Lacey's resolution and printed nine thousand copies at government expense. For the next fifty years, a copy of *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* was given to every senator and representative at his or her swearing in.

So what is the origin of the modern charge that Jefferson hated the traditional Bible and therefore made his own? A contemporary researcher who investigated this claim concluded:

Unfortunately, all those who have published the "Jefferson Bible" since 1903 have been almost universally either Unitarian or rationalist and secular in their approach, and their introductions to the book have . . . misrepresented Jefferson's motivations and beliefs to conform to their own theological assumptions or agendas.

In summary, there is *no* "Jefferson Bible," and Jefferson did *not* produce any work for the purpose of deleting the miraculous and supernatural. He did, however, make two works that compiled the teachings of Jesus—one for use as a beginning reader for Indians and the other for his own personal use. Each was exactly and only what Jefferson said it was. Two centuries ago Jefferson told his close evangelical friend, Dr. Benjamin Rush: "My views . . . [are] very different from that anti-Christian system imputed to me by those who know nothing of my opinions," and that declaration certainly remains true today.

So the next time someone refers to a so-called Jefferson Bible, ask them to identify the specific work about which they are talking; most won't be able to do so. Then ask them where they got their information. The chances are high that it was some recent Deconstructionist, Minimalist, Modernist, or Academic Collectivist source but certainly not any original documentary source—for the very simple reason that no such source exists.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 82-83). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## LIE #4: Thomas Jefferson Was a Racist Who Opposed Equality for Black Americans

Modern writers claim:

Thomas Jefferson was demonstrably a racist—and a particularly aggressive and vindictive one at that. . . . His flaws are beyond redemption. . . . Jefferson is a patron saint far more suitable to white supremacists than to modern American liberals.

Jefferson . . . did not believe that all were created equal. He was a racist.

Jefferson was a racist. There is no question about that.

Stephen Lyons, a writer for major national newspapers, adds even another charge:

The venerable Thomas Jefferson has been the subject of a recent rash of bad publicity, including [Garry] Wills' *Negro President*. The book is an expansion of three lectures Wills gave at Northwestern University in which he examines the influence on Jeffersonian politics by the infamous "three-fifths slave vote." . . . The infamous three-fifths vote, or "federal ratio," a non-negotiable ratification compromise insisted on by the South at the Constitutional Convention, counted each slave as 60 percent of a person.

Before unequivocally demonstrating that Jefferson was not a racist, Lyons' charge concerning the Three-Fifths Clause of the Constitution must be addressed.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 85-86). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In the Constitution, each state was to receive one federal representative to Congress for every 30,000 inhabitants in the state. Since slaves accounted for much of the Southern population (almost half the inhabitants of South Carolina and 40 percent of Georgia), Southern states planned to count their slaves as though they were free inhabitants, thereby using slaves to send more proslavery representatives to Congress.

The antislavery Founders from the North strenuously objected. They wanted only free residents to be counted, thus not only limiting proslavery members from the South but also providing them an incentive for emancipation. If the South wanted more representatives to Congress, it should free its slaves. Governor Morris, a strong opponent of slavery and "The Penman of the Constitution," argued:

Upon what principle is it that the slaves shall be computed in the representation? Are they men? Then make them citizens and let them vote. . . . [But t]he admission of slaves into the representation . . . comes to this: that the inhabitants of Georgia and South Carolina . . . shall have more votes in a government instituted for protection of the rights of mankind than the citizens of Pennsylvania or New Jersey who view with a laudable horror so nefarious [wicked] a practice.

Constitutional Convention delegate Luther Martin similarly argued that if the South was going to count its so-called property (that is, its slaves) in order to get more proslavery representation in Congress, then the North would count its "property" (that is, its "horses, cattle, mules, or any other [type of property]") in order to get more antislavery representation in Congress. Of course, the South objected just as strenuously to this proposal as the North objected to counting slaves.

The final compromise was that only 60 percent of the total slave population (that is, only three-fifths) would be counted to calculate the number of representatives to Congress. This would reduce the number of representatives to Congress from Southern states with large slave populations. The Three-Fifths Clause had nothing to do with the worth of any individual; in fact, Free Blacks in the North and

South often were extended the full rights of a citizen, including the right to vote. The clause had to do only with calculating representation.

Because previous generations actually read the debates surrounding that clause rather than just quoting some modern author's mischaracterization of it, black civil rights leaders such as Frederick Douglass identified the Three-Fifths Clause as one of the antislavery provisions of the Constitution. But Deconstructionist scholars and writers are determined to twist that clause into a tool by which to bash the Founding Fathers—specifically Jefferson, as Lyons has done.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 86-88). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

America in Jefferson's day, as today, was not homogenous, whether in business, religion, or culture. Many differences were distinguishable by geographic regions. This was especially true on the subject of slavery and civil rights.

In the Northern colonies (Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, etc.), slavery was generally abhorred; blacks were elected to public office (Wentworth Cheswill in New Hampshire in 1768, Thomas Hercules in Pennsylvania in 1793, and others). Blacks also distinguished themselves for their exploits in military service during the Revolution (Peter Salem, Lemuel Haynes, Prince Estabrook, Prince Whipple, and others); and both blacks and whites voted in elections. Blacks could be found pastoring or preaching to largely white churches and congregations (Lemuel Haynes, Richard Allen, Harry Hoosier, and others); and in many churches, blacks and whites attended and worshipped together. While there definitely was some racism in the North, it was largely the exception rather than the rule. In the North, both ministers and political leaders were boldly and unapologetically outspoken for civil rights, and the general stance was for immediate emancipation and equality. Abolition societies abounded and exerted significant influence.

The Southern colonies (North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia) were almost polar opposites. Racism was institutionalized. Churches where both blacks and whites worshipped together, such as those pastored by black minister Andrew Bryan of Georgia, were the exception rather than the rule. The possibility of blacks holding office or voting was virtually nonexistent, and political leaders who spoke out against slavery were attacked. Freedom for slaves? Never! Equality for blacks? Unthinkable! This was the dominant view with only a few individual exceptions, such as Founding Father John Laurens of South Carolina. Abolition societies were rare, and the ones that existed were impotent.

The Middle colonies (Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware) were somewhat a mix of the two other regions, but they were much closer in philosophy to the Southern colonies than the Northern ones. The majority strongly supported slavery, but there were definitely vocal minority groups advocating civil rights. Institutionalized racism was present but not as rigidly enforced as in the Southern colonies. Many ministers and a few civil leaders—such as Jefferson, George Washington, Richard Bland, George Mason, Richard Henry Lee, William Hooper, William Few, and others—spoke openly for emancipation. But when doing so they often received a cold and sometimes even a hostile reception yet usually not with the virulent reaction and intolerance so common in the Southern colonies.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 88-89). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . before chronicling Jefferson's many emancipation declarations and actions, the elephant in the room must be addressed: if Jefferson was indeed so antislavery, then why didn't he release his own slaves? After all, George Washington allowed for the freeing of his slaves on his death in 1799, so why didn't Jefferson at least do the same at his death in 1826? The answer is Virginia law. In 1799 Virginia



allowed owners to emancipate their slaves on their death; in 1826 state laws had been changed to prohibit that practice.

As previously acknowledged, Virginia was rigid in its proslavery laws and had been so for more than a century before Jefferson. As early as 1692, it began placing significant economic hurdles in the way of those wanting to emancipate slaves, requiring:

[N]o Negro or mulatto slave shall be set free—unless the emancipator pays for his transportation out of the country within six months.

Subsequent laws imposed even harsher restrictions, mandating that a slave could not be freed unless the owner guaranteed a full security bond for the education, livelihood, and support of the freed slave. Then, in 1723 a law was passed that forbade the emancipation of slaves under any circumstance—even by a last will and testament. The only exceptions were for cases of “meritorious service” by a slave, a determination that could be made only by the state governor and his council on a case-by-case basis.

But in 1782, for a very short time, Virginia began to move in a new direction. An emancipation law was passed, declaring:

[T]hose persons who are disposed to emancipate their slaves may be empowered so to do and . . . it shall hereafter be lawful for any person, by his or her last will and testament, . . . to emancipate and set free his or her slaves.

It was as a result of this law that George Washington was able to free his slaves in his last will and testament in 1799.

But in 1806 Virginia repealed much of that law. It technically retained emancipation but placed an almost impossible economic burden on emancipators, requiring that freed slaves who were young, old, weak, or infirm “shall respectively be supported and maintained by the person so liberating them, or by his or her estate.” The law even allowed a wife to reverse an emancipation made by her husband in his will. Furthermore, the law required that a freed slave promptly depart the state or else reenter slavery, thus making it almost impossible for an emancipated slave to remain near his or her spouse, children, or family members who had not been freed. Many, therefore, preferred to remain in slavery with their families rather than become free and be separated from them.

It was under these laws that Jefferson was required to operate. In 1814 he lamented to an abolitionist minister friend in Illinois that in Virginia “[t]he laws do not permit us to turn them loose.” And even if Jefferson had done so, he certainly did not have the finances required by law to provide a livelihood and support for each of his freed slaves. Jefferson had received the bulk of his slaves—187 of them—through inheritance and had done so at a very young age. As he acknowledged: “[A]t fourteen years of age, the whole care and direction of myself was thrown on myself entirely without a relation or friend qualified to advise or guide me.” He did not have the economic means to conform to that oppressive state law. Recall that at one point his own personal economic shortages had caused him to approach Congress about buying his cherished library in order to generate much-needed operating cash.

Part of Jefferson’s cash shortage was caused by a major devaluation of money. After placing large amounts of money in the loan office during the American Revolution, those funds were returned “back again at a depreciation out to him of one for forty.” That is, the amount he received back was worth only 2.5 percent of what it had been worth when he placed it into the government loan office.

Jefferson's economic hardship was also exacerbated by his practice, unlike other slave owners, of paying his slaves for the vegetables they raised, meat obtained while hunting and fishing, and for extra tasks performed outside normal working hours. He even offered a revolutionary profit-sharing plan for the products that his enslaved artisans produced in their shops.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 91-93). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Many of those today who call Jefferson an unrepentant racist also claim that he believed blacks were inferior to whites. For example, in the true spirit of Academic Collectivism:

Jefferson . . . was convinced . . . blacks had to be seen as lower beings because of their inferiority.

Jefferson . . . believed . . . blacks were inferior to whites in body and mind.

Thomas Jefferson . . . thought black people intellectually inferior to whites.

Thomas Jefferson was not interested in abolition. . . . Thomas Jefferson considered blacks inferior.

To "prove" this charge, such writers point to comments Jefferson made in his Notes on the State of Virginia (1781) in which he expressed not only his ardent desire for the emancipation of slaves but also twice lightly questioned whether blacks might be inferior. But the callous conclusion reached by modern Minimalist writers is possible only if they cite just those two Jefferson comments and ignore the rest of the lengthy emancipation treatise from which those statements are cut.

In fact, in order to mitigate his own two comments, Jefferson openly acknowledged that his personal experience with blacks had been limited almost exclusively to the context of slavery—that is, his personal dealings had been with oppressed blacks who had been denied education. Very few analysts, either then or now, would dispute that under such conditions blacks might well appear inferior in intellectual abilities, for they had absolutely no opportunity to prove otherwise. Jefferson candidly acknowledged his own subjective situation and his lack of objective data on which to base any fixed opinion. He even openly lamented:

To our reproach, it must be said that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. I advance it, therefore, as a suspicion only that the blacks . . . are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. (emphasis added)

He also explained that "[i]t will be right to make great allowances for the difference of condition, of education, of conversation, of the sphere in which they move" (emphasis added).

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 96-97). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In 1770 Jefferson represented a slave in court, arguing for his freedom. Jefferson explained:

Under the law of nature, all men are born free. Everyone comes into the world with a right to his own person, which includes the liberty of moving and using it at his own will. This is what is called personal liberty, and is given him by the Author of Nature.

Jefferson lost the case. In 1772, he also argued a similar case.

In 1773 and 1774 a number of American colonies, including Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, passed antislavery laws, all of which were struck down by the king in 1774. That year Jefferson penned “A Summary View of the Rights of British America.” His purpose was to remind the British that legitimate American concerns were being ignored—one of which was the king’s veto of American antislavery laws.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 100). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In 1776 Jefferson wrote a draft of the original state constitution for Virginia and included a provision that “[n]o person hereafter coming into this country [Virginia] shall be held in slavery under any pretext whatever.” That provision was rejected by the state convention.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 100). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In 1784 Jefferson returned to service in the Continental Congress where he introduced a provision to end slavery in every territory that would eventually become a state in the nation. His proposal stated that “after the year 1800 of the Christian era, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any of the said states.”

Jefferson’s law fell one vote short of passage. As he explained:

There were ten states present. Six voted unanimously for it, three against it, and one was divided. And seven votes being requisite to decide the proposition affirmatively [i.e., to pass the measure under the Articles of Confederation], it was lost. . . . Thus we see the fate of millions unborn hanging on the tongue of one man, & heaven was silent in that awful moment! But it is to be hoped it will not always be silent & that the friends to the rights of human nature will in the end prevail.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 102). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . At the time the Constitution was written and ratified, it was believed that within twenty years, the Southern states would be ready to relinquish slavery, and this law would pave the way.

Jefferson happily signed that law, telling a group of Quakers:

Whatever may have been the circumstances which influenced our forefathers to permit the introduction of personal bondage into any part of these states . . . we may rejoice that such circumstances and such a sense of them exist no longer. . . . I sincerely pray with you, my friends, that all the members of the human family may, in the time prescribed by the Father of us all, find themselves securely established in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and happiness.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 104). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . in 1820 Democrats gained control of Congress for the first time. They enacted the Missouri Compromise, thus reversing the 1789 policy and allowing slavery into some federal territories where it had been previously prohibited. For the first time slavery was being not just tolerated but officially expanded by the federal government.

The Missouri Compromise was strenuously opposed by the few Founding Fathers still alive at that time. Elias Boudinot, a president of Congress during the Revolution and a framer of the Bill of Rights, warned that this new pro-slavery direction by Congress would bring “an end to the happiness of the United States;” a frail John Adams feared that lifting the slavery prohibition would destroy America; James Madison confessed that the new policy “fills me with no slight anxiety,” and foreseeing what

would become the Civil War, he worried that pitting slave states against free states would result in “awful shocks against each other.” But perhaps no one from that generation was as greatly distressed as the elderly seventy-seven-year-old Jefferson, who was dismayed, frustrated, and even depressed by the passage of that law and the retreat from emancipation that it represented. He lamented, “In the gloomiest moment of the Revolutionary War, I never had any apprehensions equal to what I feel from this source.”

Jefferson confided to a fellow political leader:

I had for a long time ceased to read newspapers or pay any attention to public affairs, confident they were in good hands, and content to be a passenger in our bark [small ship] to the shore from which I am not distant [death]. But this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell [funeral bell] of the Union. . . . I regret that I am now to die in the belief that the useless sacrifice of themselves by the generation of 1776 to acquire self-government and happiness to their country is to be thrown away by the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons. . . . [This is an] act of suicide on themselves, and of treason against the hopes of the world.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 107-108). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Black abolitionists, such as Fredrick Douglass also regularly invoked Jefferson to assist their own efforts. Douglass had lived in slavery until he escaped to New York, later going to work for the Massachusetts antislavery society and also serving as a Zion Methodist Church preacher. During the Civil War Douglass helped recruit the first black regiment to fight for the Union and advised Abraham Lincoln on the Emancipation Proclamation. Following the war he received presidential appointments from four Republican presidents. . . .

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 111). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

At a speech in Virginia following the Civil War, Douglass declared:

I have been charged with lifelong hostility to one of the cherished institutions of Virginia [i.e., slavery]. I am not ashamed of that lifelong opposition. . . . It was, Virginia, your own Thomas Jefferson that taught me that all men are created equal.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 112). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

On numerous other occasions Douglass invoked Jefferson as an authority in his crusade to end slavery and achieve full equality and civil rights. Additional civil rights crusaders who invoked Jefferson in a similarly positive manner included Henry Highland Garnet, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Colin Powell, and others.

Was Jefferson impeccable on race and civil rights? Certainly not. He recognized and admitted that he had some prejudices, but he also openly acknowledged that he wanted to be proven wrong concerning those views. Yet despite his self-acknowledged weaknesses, Jefferson faithfully and consistently advocated for emancipation and civil rights throughout his long life, even when it would have been easier and better for him if he had remained silent or inactive.

Had Jefferson been free from the laws of his own state—that is, had he lived in a state such as Massachusetts, New Hampshire, or Connecticut—he likely would be universally hailed today as a bold civil rights leader, for his efforts and writings would certainly compare favorably to those of great civil rights advocates in the Northern states. In fact, if Jefferson had proposed his various pieces of legislation in those states, they would certainly have passed, and he would have been deemed a national civil rights

hero. But his geography and circumstances doomed him to a different fate. Modern writers now refuse to recognize what previous generations openly acknowledged: Jefferson was a bold, staunch, and consistent advocate and defender of emancipation and civil rights.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 112-113). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## LIE #5: Thomas Jefferson Advocated a Secular Public Square through the Separation of Church and State

Two centuries ago a Jefferson supporter penned a work foreshadowing modern claims by declaring Jefferson to be a leading constitutional influence. When Jefferson read that claim, he promptly instructed the author to correct that mistake, telling him:

One passage in the paper you enclosed me must be corrected. It is the following, "and all say it was yourself more than any other individual, that planned and established it," i.e., the Constitution.

What did Jefferson see wrong in stating the very claim repeated today? He bluntly explained:

I was in Europe when the Constitution was planned and never saw it till after it was established.

A simple fact unknown or ignored by many of today's writers and scholars is that Jefferson did *not* participate in framing the Constitution. He was not even in America when it was framed; so how could he be considered a primary influence on it? And he was also out of the country when the First Amendment and Bill of Rights were framed. As he openly acknowledged:

On receiving [the Constitution while in France], I wrote strongly to Mr. Madison, urging the want of provision [lack of provision] for the freedom of religion, freedom of the press, trial by jury, habeas corpus, the substitution of militia for a standing army, and an express reservation to the States of all rights not specifically granted to the Union. . . . This is all the hand I had in what related to the Constitution. (emphasis added)

Jefferson's only role with the Constitution was to broadly call for a general Bill of Rights. While this is no insignificant thing, it was the same action taken by dozens of other Founders. So how can Jefferson be the father of the First Amendment if he never saw it until months after it was finished? Significantly, there were fifty-five individuals who framed the Constitution at the Constitutional Convention and ninety in the first federal Congress who framed the Bill of Rights; Jefferson was among neither group.

So why have so many courts and modern writers made him the singular go-to expert on religion clauses from documents in which he had no direct involvement? Why has he been given a position of "expert" that he himself properly refused? It is because he penned a letter containing the eight-word phrase "a wall of separation between church and state." Courts and modern scholars have found that simple phrase, when divorced from its context, useful in providing the appearance of historical approval for their own efforts to secularize the public square.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 117-118). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition*

In the Scriptures, God had placed Moses over civil affairs and Aaron over spiritual ones. The nation was one, but the jurisdictions were two with separate leaders over each. In 2 Chronicles 26, when King Uzziah attempted to assume the duties of both State and Church, God Himself weighed in; He sovereignly and instantly struck down Uzziah, thus reaffirming the separation He had placed between the two institutions.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 119). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

The philosophy of keeping the State limited and at arm's length from regulating or punishing religious

practices and expressions was planted deeply into American thinking. Eventually, it was nationally enshrined in the First Amendment, which states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the Free Exercise thereof.”

The first part of the Amendment is now called the establishment clause and the latter part, the free exercise clause. The language of both is clear; and both clauses were pointed solely at the State not the Church. Notice that the establishment clause prohibited the *State* from enforcing religious conformity, and the free exercise clause ensured that the *State* would protect—rather than suppress, as it currently does—citizens’ rights of conscience and religious expression. Both clauses are prohibitions only on the power of *Congress* (i.e., the government), not on religious individuals or organizations.

This was the meaning of “separation of church and state” with which Jefferson was intimately familiar, and it was this interpretation, and not the modern perversion of it, that he repeatedly reaffirmed in his writings and practices.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 122). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . in Jefferson’s view, the only religious expressions that the government could hamper were acts “against peace and good order,” “injurious to others,” acts “subversive of good order,” or acts by “the man who works ill to his neighbor.”

That Court (and others) then identified a handful of actions that, if perpetrated in the name of religion, the government did have legitimate reason to limit, including bigamy, concubinage, incest, child sacrifice, infanticide, parricide, and other similar crimes. But the government was *not* to impede traditional religious expressions in public, such as public prayer, public display of religious symbols, public use of Scriptures, acknowledgement of God in public events, and so on. In short, the separation of Church and State existed not to remove or secularize the free exercise of religion but rather to preserve and protect it, regardless of whether it was exercised in private or public.

This was the universal understanding of separation of Church and State—until the Court’s landmark ruling in 1947 in *Everson v. Board of Education* in which it announced it would reverse this historic meaning. In that case the Court cited only Jefferson’s eight-word separation metaphor, completely severing the phrase from its historical context and the rest of Jefferson’s clearly worded letter, and then expressed for the first time that the phrase existed not to protect religion in the public square but to remove it.

The next year, in 1948, the Court repeated its rhetoric of the previous year declaring:

[T]he First Amendment has erected a wall between Church and State which must be kept high and impregnable.

The Court again refused to reference Jefferson’s full (and short) letter, and it again applied Jefferson’s eight-word phrase in a religiously hostile manner, using it to enforce an ardent public secularism.

Amazingly, in that case the Court had ruled that a school in Illinois had made the egregious mistake of allowing voluntary religious activities by students, a practice that had characterized American education for the previous three centuries. The permitted religious activity had actually been so voluntary that students were allowed to participate only with the written consent of their parents. But an atheist had objected not to what her own children were doing with religious expressions but to what other parents were letting their children do—attend a voluntary religious class. The Court therefore struck down those individual voluntary activities, demanding that the school remain aggressively and rigidly secular. It ruled that the school should no longer permit the constitutionally guaranteed free

exercise of religion even for those who wished to enjoy it. For the first time the separation metaphor had become a rigid, callous phrase no longer allowing or accommodating voluntary religious activities in a public setting. The result of the Court's twisting of Jefferson's phrase was that the First Amendment was no longer a prohibition on the government but rather on individuals.

Courts have subsequently pushed that original misinterpretation of separation increasingly outward to the point where they have decided the First Amendment's injunction that "*Congress* shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" now means:

- an *individual* student may not say a voluntary prayer at a football game, graduation, or any other school event
- *cadets* at military academies may not engage in offering voluntary prayers over their meals
- a *choir* may not sing a religious song as part of a school concert
- a *school* may not place a Bible in a classroom library
- an *individual student* may not write a research paper on a religious topic, draw religious artwork in an art class, or carry his personal Bible onto school grounds

Significantly, none of these activities pertains to "Congress making a law," which is the only body and the only activity proscribed by the First Amendment. But ignoring that succinct stricture, the modern misapplication of the historic separation doctrine now routinely results in egregious decisions:

- A state employee in Minnesota was barred from parking his car in the state parking lot because he had a religious sticker on his bumper.
- A five-year-old kindergarten student in Saratoga Springs, New York, was forbidden to say a prayer over her lunch and was scolded by a teacher for doing so.
- A military honor guardsman was removed from his position for saying, "God bless you and this family, and God bless the United States of America" while presenting a folded flag to a family during a military funeral—a statement that the family requested be made at the funeral.
- Senior citizens meeting at a community senior center in Balch Springs, Texas, were prohibited from praying over their own meals.
- A library employee in Russellville, Kentucky, was barred from wearing her necklace because it had a small cross on it.
- College students serving as residential assistants in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, were prohibited from holding Bible studies in their own private dorm rooms.
- A third grader in Orono, Maine, who wore a T-shirt containing the words "Jesus Christ" was required to turn the shirt inside out so the words could not be seen.
- A school official in Saint Louis, Missouri, caught an elementary student praying over his lunch; he lifted the student from his seat, reprimanded him in front of the other students, and took him to the principal, who ordered him to stop praying.
- In cities in Texas, Indiana, Ohio, Georgia, Kansas, Michigan, Pennsylvania, California, Nebraska, and elsewhere citizens were not permitted to hand out religious literature on public sidewalks or preach in public areas and were actually arrested or threatened with arrest for doing so.

And there are literally hundreds of similar examples.

Is this what Jefferson intended? Did he want to prohibit citizens from expressing their faith publicly? Was he truly a secularist who wanted a stridently religion-free public square? His words certainly do not indicate this to be his desire; but how about his actions? After all, actions speak louder than words.

Jefferson's actions in this area are completely consistent with his words. He has an extremely long



and consistent record of deliberately and intentionally including rather than excluding religious expressions and activities in the public arena.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 126-130). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In 1776, while serving in the Continental Congress, he was placed on a committee of five to draft the Declaration of Independence. He was the principal author of that document, and he incorporated four explicit, open acknowledgments of God, some made by his own hand and some added by Congress. Jefferson's Declaration was actually a dual declaration: of independence from Great Britain and dependence on God.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 131). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In 1780, while still serving as governor, Jefferson ordered that an official state medal be created with the religious motto "Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God."<sup>84</sup> This phrase had been proposed to Congress in 1776 as part of the new national seal, and Jefferson also placed it on his own personal seal.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 132). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

There are many additional examples, and they all clearly demonstrate that Jefferson has *no* record of attempting to secularize the public square. Furthermore, all of his religious activities at the federal level occurred after the First Amendment had been adopted, showing that he saw no violation of the First Amendment in any of his actions. In fact, no one did—not even his enemies. No one ever raised a voice of dissent against Jefferson's federal religious practices; no one claimed that they were improper or that they violated the Constitution.

The only voice of objection ever raised was to complain that President Jefferson, unlike his predecessors George Washington and John Adams, did not issue any national prayer proclamations.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 137). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Jefferson made very clear that his refusal to issue federal prayer proclamations did not spring from any concerns over religious expressions in general but rather only from his view of federalism and which was the proper governmental jurisdiction. He believed that there was a limitation on the federal government's ability to direct the states in which religious activities they could or should participate in, but he saw no such limitations on state or local governments. Actively encouraging public religious activities for citizens was well within their jurisdiction and completely appropriate and constitutional.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 138-139). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Certainly, presidents before and after Jefferson did not agree with this view and regularly issued federal prayer proclamations, but the evidence shows that Jefferson's refusal to do so was not because of any notion of secularism on his part but rather because of his view of federalism.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 138-139). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Jefferson's words and actions unequivocally demonstrate that he was not "a secular humanist," nor

did he in any manner seek to secularize the public square. This is simply another of the many modern Jefferson lies that has no basis in history.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 140). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## LIE #6: Thomas Jefferson Detested the Clergy

Throughout the Colonial, Revolutionary, and early Federal periods, organized political parties were nonexistent. The people were divided as Whigs and Tories, Patriots and Loyalists, Monarchists and Republicans, but there was no political party affiliation. This changed during the administration of President George Washington. Widely differing viewpoints on the scope and power of the federal government emerged among his leadership. Individuals such as Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton and Vice President John Adams sought for increased federal power, while others, such as Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Attorney General Edmund Jennings Randolph, sought for limited federal power.

Those led by Adams and Hamilton coalesced into what became known as the Federalist Party; those led by Jefferson coalesced into the Anti-Federalist Party. Anti-Federalists were also known as Republicans and then as Democratic-Republicans; by the time of Andrew Jackson, they had become the Democrats. The Northern colonies and New England provided the strongest base of support for the Federalists while the strength of the Anti-Federalists was from Pennsylvania southward. The Federalists tended to be stronger in populous areas already accustomed to more government at numerous levels. The Anti-Federalists were generally stronger in rural areas where people were more lightly governed.

Jefferson observed that those in the Northern regions had many good traits; they were “cool, sober, laborious, persevering . . . jealous of their own liberties and just to those of others” while those in the south had many negative traits, including being “voluptuary, indolent, unsteady, . . . zealous for their own liberties but trampling on those of others.” But Jefferson saw the religious characteristics of the two regions as generally reversed: “[I]n the north they are . . . chicaning, superstitious, and hypocritical in their religion” while “in the south they are . . . candid, without attachment or pretensions to any religion but that of the heart.” Religion was definitely important in all regions of early America, but as Jefferson noted, there was indeed a clear difference in the way it was practiced in Federalist and Anti-Federalist regions.

In the more populated North, churches abounded and participation was convenient; citizens were therefore frequent and regular in their attendance. John Adams, like so many others in New England, described himself as a “church-going animal.” The pastors of New England had frequent contact with their parishioners throughout the week and held much influence in the community.

With sparser population southward, churches were fewer and more distant from each other. Participation often required deliberate effort. For George Washington to attend church each Sunday, as was his habit, was a full day commitment. It was typically a two- to three-hour ride on horseback or carriage to his church ten miles from Mt. Vernon. A two-hour service was common, and the return ride home took another few hours, thus consuming the entire day. Ministers in the South were just as important as in the North, but they had fewer opportunities to influence their parishioners.

The presidential election of 1800 was America’s first real partisan political contest, pitting Jefferson the Anti-Federalist against Adams the Federalist. New Englanders were fiercely loyal to their Federalist hero, John Adams; those southward strongly supported their Anti-Federalist champion, Thomas Jefferson. The campaign was vicious—probably the most venomous in American history with the Federalists taking a much nastier approach in their attacks against Jefferson than the Anti-Federalists did against Adams.

For example, Jefferson was accused by Federalist critics not only of being anti-Christian but also of being a murderer, an atheist, a thief, and a cohort of foreign convicts. It was reported that he was

secretly plotting the destruction and overthrow of the Constitution. He was accused of defrauding a widow and her children. The nation was alerted that he planned to abolish the navy and starve the farmers, and citizens were warned that if Jefferson were elected, he would confiscate and burn every Bible in America. This latter charge was so widely disseminated that in New England Bibles were actually buried upon Jefferson's election so that he could not find and burn them.

Since one of the quickest ways to vilify and ostracize a person in New England was to claim that he was antireligious or lacked morals, Federalist ministers regularly accused Jefferson of both. Some of the most vicious attacks against him actually came from such ministers who preached notable sermons about him—sermons often containing blatant lies, gross distortions, and vile misrepresentations.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 142-144). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . Jefferson lamented:

[F]rom the [Federalist] clergy I expect no mercy. They crucified their Savior, Who preached that their kingdom was not of this world; and all who practice on that precept must expect the extreme of their wrath. The laws of the present day withhold their hands from blood, but lies and slander still remain to them.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 148). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

For today's critics to take Jefferson's comments about "law religion" clergy and impute them to all clergy is like saying that the Founding Fathers who specifically condemned and denounced Benedict Arnold were actually condemning all military leaders. Yet this is what Deconstructionists and Minimalists regularly do with Jefferson's comments about the specific practices of a particular type of clergy.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 161-162). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In summary, many of Jefferson's writings praise clergymen and their important work, they were among his close friends, and he regularly opened his pocketbook and exerted his influence to help them. The modern claim that Jefferson was anticlerical is another one of the many Jefferson lies that has penetrated deeply into American thinking today; it is yet another Jefferson lie that must be shaken off.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 163). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## LIE #7: Thomas Jefferson Was an Atheist and Not a Christian

Across his long life Jefferson went through several phases regarding his own personal beliefs about specific doctrines of Christianity. There are times when he took a firm position on a particular Christian doctrine then perhaps twenty years later changed his view and then again two decades after that reverted back to his original view. For this reason, quotes can be selected to make Jefferson appear to be either a mainstream Christian or a pagan heretic, depending on the period of Jefferson's life from which the statements are taken.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 166). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Jefferson loved and adored Martha, and they had six children—five daughters and one son. Martha was his constant companion and closest friend, and they were devoted to each other. In fact, the children clearly recalled and spoke of the sweet and precious relationship between the two, including Martha's "passionate attachment to him, and her exalted opinion of him." But the two also shared much loss and grief over their dear children. Of the six, only two lived to adulthood; Martha saw three of her children die, and Thomas saw five of them buried.

Martha's tragic death occurred after only ten years of blissful marriage. It was a stunning blow to Jefferson, and he was emotionally devastated. As presidential biographer William Stoddard affirms:

[H]e was utterly absorbed in sorrow and took no note of what was going on around him. His dream of life had been shattered, and it seemed as if life itself had lost its claim upon him, for no faith or hope of his reached onward and inward to any other.

Jefferson's eldest daughter, Martha, named for her mother, was with him at the time of his wife's death, and she was her father's "constant companion" during "the first month of desolation which followed." She recounted Jefferson's frame of mind during that tragic period, recalling:

A moment before the closing scene, he was led from the room almost in a state of insensibility by his sister Mrs. Carr, who with great difficulty got him into his library where he fainted and remained so long insensible that they feared he never would revive. The scene that followed I did not witness; but the violence of his emotion when, almost by stealth, I entered his room at night, to this day I dare not trust myself to describe. He kept [never left] his room three weeks, and I was never a moment from his side. He walked almost incessantly night and day, only lying down occasionally, when nature was completely exhausted, on a pallet that had been brought in during his long fainting-fit. My aunts remained constantly with him for some weeks—I do not remember how many. When at last he left his room, he rode out, and from that time he was incessantly on horseback, rambling about the mountain in the least frequented roads, and just as often through the woods.

Not long after Martha's death, Jefferson was sent by the Continental Congress as a diplomat to France. During those years, with the deep impact and clear remembrances and grief over Martha still so real to him, many questions remained, unanswered, and his faith was shaken. This is reflected in his writings. But by the time he became president, he had returned to a stronger and more orthodox position.

This was evident only four years into his presidency when he faced another personal tragedy. In 1804 his twenty-five-year-old daughter, Mary (Polly), was in poor health after giving birth to her third

child. Her husband, a congressman, was away in Washington with her father, so Polly moved into Monticello where she could receive constant attention. As soon as the legislative session was over, Jefferson rushed home to help care for her, but only a few short weeks after he returned, his beloved Polly died. This left only his eldest daughter, Martha, and himself remaining from the family of eight. Martha's daughter (Jefferson's granddaughter) reported his reaction to the death of Polly:

My mother [Martha] has told me that on the day of her sister's death, she left her father alone for some hours. He then sent for her, and she found him with the Bible in his hands. He who has been so often and so harshly accused of unbelief, he, in his hour of intense affliction, sought and found consolation in the Sacred Volume.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 168-170). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Virginia had been heavily Anglican since its founding, but the revival caused the rapid growth of the Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and Methodists in the state. Ministers in central Virginia during that time often moved easily between denominations (such as the Reverend Devereaux Jarratt who was trained as a Presbyterian, became an Anglican priest, and spoke regularly in Methodist churches). Similarly, the area's devout laymen were also often active in multiple denominations. Jefferson's good friend and neighbor Henry Fry served with Jefferson on the board of Anglican churches in the area but was converted to Methodism and worked in both denominations.

This type of interdenominational cooperation was possible primarily because leading ministers during the Great Awakening began emphasizing the vital areas of the Scriptures on which nearly all Christians agreed rather than the few areas about which they vigorously disagreed. Under the influence of this revival and its interdenominational cooperation even the Anglican Church in Virginia, softened its policy. As affirmed by Virginia historian William H. B. Thomas, "[t]he necessity of attending an Anglican church was relaxed—provided every man attend some church regularly."

Most pastors in the Charlottesville region at this time can be described as evangelical, regardless of their denominations. They also preached a practical Christianity that specifically addressed daily personal behavior and provided relevant Biblical teaching and social applications. It touched issues such as interpersonal interactions, business dealings, and one's personal relationship with God as well as moral issues such as integrity, courage, drunkenness, profanity, and immorality. Many sermons also addressed legislative policies of the day, contrasting public policies with Biblical positions on those issues, including taxation, good government, gambling, and slavery.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 171). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Another characteristic of the First and Second Great Awakenings was that blacks were very active and involved. Many ministers, both black and white, would preach to mixed crowds.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 172). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

It was during this time of revival in Virginia that many of the Dissenting (that is, non-Anglican) churches and ministers became active in politics, working to separate the church from the state and to keep the government from interfering with their own religious expressions and activities. For example, the Separate Baptists refused to comply with the Anglican requirement in state law mandating that they obtain government permission before conducting religious services. They asserted that it was their right to do what God had told them, without need of government approval. The Great Awakening not only promoted the concepts of individualism and inalienable rights (personal liberty, religious expression,

freedom of conscience, and so on), but also that such rights should be protected by government rather than regulated by it.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 172). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

...many of the spiritual practices apparent in Charlottesville during that time became established features of Jefferson's personal religious views. For example, he developed a lifelong affinity for things such as interdenominational cooperation and emphasizing the doctrinal majors uniting Christians rather than the things dividing them. He also focused on identifying and protecting God-given inalienable rights; separating state from church and thereby preserving the freedom of conscience; emancipating slaves; leaning against Calvinism; etc.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 173). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

During that time, many evangelical churches could find no replacements as their pastors died off or retired, and so they closed their doors. In other churches, the pulpit remained unfilled for more than a decade.

Concurrent with these gloomy developments in Virginia, several ministers in other parts of the country began a parallel spiritual movement that was to take a deep root in Charlottesville. This new movement was characterized by what became a radical call for a return to the primitive form of Christianity practiced by the Apostles. It decried the corruption of the modern Christian church and wanted to revive an earlier and simpler version of Christianity. This movement became known as Christian Primitivism or the Restoration Movement, and it developed from four primary leaders.

One was Presbyterian minister Barton Stone of Kentucky, who led the famous Cane Ridge revival. He called for an end to denominations and advocated that Christians have no creed but the Bible. He therefore used only the simple descriptive title "Christian" for his congregations. (Stone had grown up Anglican but had also been a Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian.)

Another Restoration leader was Presbyterian minister Thomas Campbell of Pennsylvania. He held many of the same beliefs as Stone and Campbell's son, Alexander, advocated those positions in the western parts of Virginia. Their followers also embraced the unpretentious title of "Christian." Alexander explained that their purpose was to "espouse the cause of no religious sect, excepting that ancient sect called Christians first at Antioch" [Acts 11:26].

A third leader was the Reverend Elias Smith of New Hampshire, who left the Baptist denomination and began a new group that "agreed to consider ourselves Christians, without the addition of any unscriptural name."

A fourth leader was Jefferson's good friend, the Reverend James O'Kelly of Virginia, who had actually started this trend well before any of the other three changing the name of his group from "Republican Methodists" to simply "Christians."

The followers of Stone, Smith, and O'Kelly came together in 1810, calling themselves "Christian Connection" (sometimes "Christian Connexion"). Campbell's group, while philosophically aligned with the other three, did not combine with them until years later, but in 1811 it did take the name "Christian Association."

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 173-175). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

### ***On Christian Unity and Cooperation***

Jefferson believed strongly that the teachings of Jesus brought unity but that the teachings of denominations brought disunity and conflict. As he explained to John Adams in 1819:

No doctrines of His lead to schism. It is the speculations of crazy theologists which have made a Babel of a religion the most moral and sublime ever preached to man, and calculated to heal and not to create differences. These religious animosities I impute to those who call themselves His ministers and who engraft their casuistries [personal interpretations] on the stock of His simple precepts. I am sometimes more angry with them than is authorized by the blessed charities which He preached.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 179). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

### ***Emphasizing the Gospels and De-emphasizing the Epistles and Old Testament***

... {Jefferson's} negative opinion about the book of Revelation did not mean that Jefferson had no opinion on the end times, for he did. Jesus had specifically addressed this subject in the Gospels, so Jefferson had reached a conclusion on it much earlier in life. He therefore instructed his daughter Martha: I hope you will have good sense enough to disregard these foolish predictions that the world is to be at an end soon. The Almighty has never made known to anybody at what time He created it, nor will He tell anybody when he means to put an end to it—if ever He means to do it. As to preparations for that event, the best way is for you to be always prepared for it. The only way to be so is never to do nor say anything amiss or to do anything wrong. Consider beforehand; you will feel something within you which will tell you it is wrong and ought not to be said or done; this is your conscience, and be sure to obey it. Our Maker has given us all this faithful internal monitor, and if you always obey it you will always be prepared for the end of the world, or for a much more certain event which is death.<sup>47</sup>

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 181). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In short, in late life, Jefferson, just like the ministers in Christian Primitivism, focused almost solely on the Gospels, criticizing both the Epistles and the Old Testament.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 182). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

### ***Anti-Calvinistic***

... Jefferson listed several specific teachings of Calvin with which he vehemently disagreed, including Calvin's claim "that God, from the beginning, elected certain individuals to be saved and certain others to be damned; and that no crimes of the former can damn them, no virtues of the latter save." He also denounced Calvin's teaching "that good works, or the love of our neighbor, are nothing" and "that reason in religion is of unlawful use." Jefferson pointedly told John Adams: I can never join Calvin in addressing his God. He was indeed an atheist (which I can never be), or rather his religion was daemonism [worship of an evil god]. If ever man worshipped a false god, he did. The being described in his five points is not the God Whom you and I acknowledge and adore—the Creator and Benevolent Governor of the world, but a demon of malignant spirit. It would be more pardonable to believe in no God at all than to blaspheme Him by the atrocious attributes of Calvin.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 183-184). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*



## CONCLUSION — Thomas Jefferson: An American Hero

Our examination of historical primary-source documents has clearly demonstrated that the picture of Jefferson's faith and morals painted by modern critics is definitively wrong. Any point his critics make might initially seem to be irrefutable, but once the rest of the story is told, reality emerges and truth can prevail. Thus, let us review the modern Jefferson lies.

1. DNA evidence has *not* proved that Jefferson fathered any children outside of his marriage to Martha. His moral reputation was attacked two centuries ago by enemies attempting to besmirch him during a presidential election, but the charges were groundless, not based on any fact. Jefferson, knowing that God knew the truth, regularly appealed to Him as his judge on this issue. He actually longed for the time when the Great Judge would not only clear him of any moral wrongdoing but also prove the accusations false. There is absolutely no historical, factual, or scientific evidence to tarnish the sexual morality of Jefferson. He therefore deserves to be listed alongside John Adams, Benjamin Rush, Roger Sherman, and so many other Founding Fathers whose reputations of moral purity remain untainted to this day.
2. Jefferson enjoyed a thoroughly religious education and was not responsible for instituting secular, religion-free education in *any* educational endeavor in which he was involved. Because he worked extensively to disestablish a state-approved denomination and to institute denominational nonpreferentialism, he therefore founded America's first trans- or nondenominational university. He ensured that multiple Christian denominations would be an active part of university life and that Christian instruction and activities would definitely occur on campus.
3. Jefferson did not write a Bible, not of any kind. He did create two religious works about Jesus that were exactly what he titled them. The first was an abridgment of the New Testament for the use of the Indians and the second was a compilation of the moral teachings of Jesus for his own personal study and meditation. In both he included multiple references to the supernatural and miraculous. Jefferson was a supporter of organizations that widely distributed the Bible. He owned a number of Bibles that he personally used and studied, was a member of the Virginia Bible Society, and financially supported the printing of Bibles. He gave Bibles to younger family members, and the Bible was openly used in institutions he helped start or direct, from Washington's public schools to the University of Virginia.
4. Jefferson was not a racist who opposed blacks and civil rights but rather was a lifelong unwavering advocate for emancipation. He was largely unsuccessful because of the state of Virginia in which he lived but it was not from a lack of effort or desire on his part. Had his efforts been undertaken in any state north of his own, he likely would be heralded today as one of America's leading early civil rights advocates. He was regularly praised by subsequent generations for his civil rights efforts and was favorably invoked by numerous civil rights leaders, both black and white. Jefferson referenced religious beliefs and teachings as the basis of his views on emancipation and equality, repeatedly declaring that because God was just, He would eventually bring slavery to an end in America, one way or another.
5. Jefferson regularly incorporated religious activities into public settings and invoked the "separation of church and state" phrase only to affirm the historic understanding that the government had no authority to stop, inhibit, or regulate public religious expressions. He therefore

called for days of prayer, introduced religious bills in the state legislature, signed numerous federal acts promoting religious groups and activities, and facilitated official churches in the US Capitol, Treasury Building, War Office, and Navy Yard. Were Jefferson alive today, he would undoubtedly be one of the loudest voices against a secularized public square.

6. Jefferson did not hate clergy, but he did repeatedly denounce the Period II clergy who participated in the unholy alliance of “kingcraft and priestcraft.” He similarly reprobated American clergy who supported “law religion” that sought the establishment of a particular denomination in a state. Such clergy viewed Jefferson as their enemy (and he, they), but clergy who sought denominational nonpreferentialism were outspoken advocates and supporters of Jefferson. Jefferson praised many clergy, wrote letters of recommendation for them, gave generously to their churches, and recruited them to run for political office. Jefferson was the hero of countless clergy and remained close friends with many of them throughout his long life.

7. Jefferson was not a secularist, deist, or atheist. He never wavered from his belief that God actively intervened in the affairs of men. He thus regularly prayed, believing that God would answer his prayers for his family, his country, the unity of the Christian church, and the end of slavery. And while he always called himself a Christian, he ended his life as a Christian Primitivist, being in personal disagreement with some orthodox theological tenets of Christianity that he had affirmed earlier in life, although still holding fast to many other traditionally sound theological tenets. But notwithstanding his own personal theological difficulties over specific doctrines, there never was a time in his life when Jefferson was not pro-Christian and pro-Christianity.

On none of these seven points was it difficult to establish truth. Each inquiry was answered by plentiful personal statements directly from Jefferson and those closest to him. Those multiple declarations resoundingly refute the modern lies about his faith and morals.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 193-196). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

. . . We briefly touched on the five modern tools of historical malpractice in an earlier chapter:

1. *Deconstructionism* pours out a steady flow of negatives about traditional heroes, values, and institutions through sniping remarks, belittling criticism, and inaccurate portrayals. . . .
2. *Poststructuralism* rejects absolutes such as God or truth, instead asserting that each individual must interpret history for himself, basing its meanings on one's personal views rather than on objective standards. . . .
3. *Modernism* examines historical incidents and persons as if they lived today rather than in the past, thereby separating history from its context and producing many flawed conclusions. . . .
4. *Minimalism* unreasonably insists on oversimplicity and reducing everything to easy answers that don't require thinking or analysis, condensing complex situations into one-line characterizations and squeezing historical individuals into preconceived, preshaped molds they do not fit. . . .
5. Academic Collectivism relies on the claims of “experts” rather than original documents as the standard for truth.

The countless errors resulting from these five historical malpractices have so thoroughly infused modern textbooks, the Web, and popular knowledge that it has now become difficult for the average citizen to even discern when history is being misrepresented. But recognition is the first step to avoidance; that is, once one knows what the five tools are, it becomes much easier to spot them and avoid being caught in their errors.

Because early detection helps defeat an enemy, recognition training has always been a regular part

of military preparation. For this reason, GIs in World War II were regularly grilled and tested on the identification of Axis tanks and planes so that they would be able to quickly spot and destroy enemy forces. Similarly, the reason animals are caught in traps is that they don't recognize the snare into which they have stepped; once a beaver, wild hog, or any other animal learns to recognize the device, it is no longer effective. This is why 2 Corinthians 2:11 reminds us that if we can identify Satan's traps, then he won't have an advantage over us.

This same principle should guide our approach to the study of history: recognize and avoid the traps of historical malpractice. But once you recognize a trap, there is more. It is not enough simply to personally avoid the trap; it must also be exposed and removed so that others will not be injured. Thus, when a soldier discovers an IED, minefield, RPG, or weapons cache, he takes steps to neutralize and remove the danger so that no one else will be harmed by inadvertently stumbling into it.

The best means for overcoming the five modern historical traps is given in Romans 12:21, which instructs us to defeat the evil with the good—that is, not just to avoid evil ourselves but also to apply its antithesis, or its antidote, to neutralize the effect of its poison. For example, praise prevails over criticism, light over darkness, gentleness over anger, humility over arrogance, and so on. So what is the antithesis for each of the five poisons so often injected into American history today?

The effects and influences of Deconstructionism can be avoided by training oneself to search out the rest of the story and discover if there is a second view or whether there are positive aspects of the account that were omitted from the original portrayal. Of course, the negatives will always be easy to find, just as they were in Numbers 13 and 14 when ten of twelve leaders went into a land filled with milk and honey but came back talking only about its giants and problems. Joshua and Caleb demonstrated in that story that while the negatives are indeed present and cannot be ignored, the positives must also be pointed out: it was a vast, abundant, verdant land of prosperity and plenty just waiting to be entered. Identifying the negatives comes naturally; acknowledging the positives takes deliberate effort.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 198-200). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

The antidote to *Modernism* is to learn about and understand the past, not just the present. Unfortunately, this is becoming difficult for two reasons. The first is a growing lack of knowledge about even the most basic facts of American history among those who have been educated in our governmental school system. For example, for citizens who have been trained with our current educational methods:

- 65 percent do not know what happened at the Constitutional Convention.
- 88 percent cannot name even one writer of the *Federalist Papers*.
- 40 percent cannot name an American enemy during World War II
- 81 percent cannot name even one of the federal government's powers.
- 70 percent do not know that the US Constitution is the supreme law of the land.

Because our educational system now graduates students lacking even minimal proficiency of the simplest facts, whatever extravagant charges Modernists may make about Jefferson or any other historical figure or even seem plausible. The general public is simply no longer knowledgeable enough about history to recognize the claims as false. Regrettably, much of this growing historical illiteracy is actually a direct result of current education laws.

For example, federal laws such as "No Child Left Behind" require student accountability testing in order for schools to secure federal funds, but that testing covers reading, math, and science, not history. Most schools instruct their teachers to focus on teaching students the subject matter covered in the testing, whether mandated by state or federal law. History is rarely a part of that focus, so it receives

minimal attention.

. . .

When evolutionary belief is applied to education, it results in the constant seeking of new methodologies of instruction, even if the old ones still work well. Consequently, traditional “old” math instruction that involves memorizing the math tables is discarded and replaced with “new” math. Of this, a US senator correctly observed:

This new-new mush-mush math will never produce quality engineers or mathematicians who can compete for jobs in the global market place. In Palo Alto, California, public school math students plummeted from the 86th percentile to the 56th in the first year of new math teaching. This awful textbook obviously fails to do in 812 pages what comparable Japanese textbooks do so well in 200. The average standardized math score in Japan is 80. In the United States it is 52.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 202-204). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

It would seem that high school students—young adults on the verge of entering active national citizenship—should study the Founding Fathers, Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights along with responsible civics and participatory constitutional government. But in most states, these specific topics are covered in the fifth-grade history; and what eleven-year-old really cares about habeas corpus, trial by jury, the rights of conscience, judicial tyranny, or taxation with representation? Fifth graders don’t, but high schoolers should. Yet we teach this material to fifth graders and not high schoolers.

But early American history is not only de-emphasized in high school, but also among post-graduate institutions. According to the *US News and World Report*, *none*—no one- of the fifty-five elite colleges and universities they ranked requires *any* course in American history for graduation, and none of the top fifty even requires a course in Western history. Since all that matters today is who we are now rather than who we were then, history courses have been replaced with modern culture courses.

But for the more than 80 percent of Americans who believe that God made man, there is still much that can be learned from history. In fact, God Himself insists that we study history, admonishing us to “remember the former things of old” (Isaiah 46:9) and “call to remembrance the former days” (Hebrews 10:32 KJV). As the Apostle Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 10, history provides lessons and illustrates principles that we can still apply today (see also Romans 15:4). But with so many Americans having been separated from even a rudimentary knowledge of their own history and its simplest facts, Modernism now has far too significant an influence.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (pp. 206-207). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

In my personal experience, I have found that biographies written before 1900 tend to present the most honest and accurate view of the good, the bad, and the ugly about the individuals they cover. Older books generally have not been infected with our modern agendas and therefore more accurately acquaint us with the period, customs, facts, and circumstances of that particular time. I place about a 75 percent confidence in biographies printed from 1900 to 1920 since various historical agendas were beginning to emerge at that time. I place only about a 50 percent reliance on biographies from 1920 to 1950 and less than a 20 percent reliance on those from the 1960s forward.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 207). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

The solution for *Academic Collectivism* is to personally investigate, study, and search out

information rather than just accept what the “experts” claim.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 208). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Consider the work *In Search of Christian America*. Three academics purported to investigate whether the American Founding, defined as the period from 1760 to 1805, was Christian. They concluded that it was not. On what historical basis did they reach this conclusion? Strikingly, 88 percent of the “historical sources” on which they relied to reach their conclusion were published after 1900 and 80 percent were published after 1950. When a book examining the period from 1760 to 1805 does so by analyzing sources printed two centuries afterward, an errant conclusion is not surprising. But this is a common practice in Academic Collectivism: regurgitate what other modern “experts” have said rather than check the original sources. . . .

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 209). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Jefferson was not only unassuming and humble but he was also good-natured, and his manners never deserted him—even to those who opposed him. For example, on one occasion while returning on horseback to Washington, he greeted a passing pedestrian. The stranger did not recognize President Jefferson, but the two began a friendly conversation that soon turned to politics. The man began to attack and deride the president, even repeating several of the lies that had been spread about him. Jefferson was amused, and “he asked the man if he knew the President personally? ‘No,’ was the reply, ‘nor do I wish to.’ ‘But do you think it fair,’ asked Jefferson, ‘to repeat such stories about a man and condemn one you dare not face?’ ‘I will never shrink from meeting Mr. Jefferson should he ever come in my way’ replied the stranger.”

Jefferson then promised him that if he would come to the White House at a certain time the next day, that he would personally introduce him to the president. The next day the stranger appeared for the meeting and was taken to meet President Jefferson. The man was immediately embarrassed and began to apologize, but Jefferson, with a grin on his face, laughed off the apology and extended his hand in welcome greeting. The two then spent several hours in delightful conversation, and when the man rose to depart, Jefferson prevailed on him to stay for dinner.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 211). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Jefferson was truly a remarkable man. He had some faults, probably much fewer than many other great leaders, but he had numerous virtues worthy of study and emulation. He was unquestionably used as an instrument of God, and all races and generations of Americans—especially God-loving Americans—have benefited from the blessings he helped secure for this nation and its posterity.

*Barton, David (2012-04-10). The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson (p. 211). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*