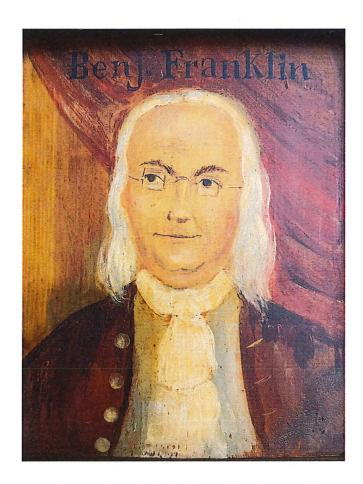
Sense being preferable to sound Dr. Franklin and America's first free lending library



Oil on wood portrait (undated) - Franklin Library Archive

Author's Introduction:

I first understood the wonders of history when my seventh grade English teacher, Mrs. Nina Santoro, taught a semester of local history. We began with a broader New England viewwe learned about what the Puritans believed and why they fled England, we read Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter", and she even collected sheep sheerings from a local farm and we learned to card wool and make yarn so we would have some small idea of how hard New Englanders had to work in order to live. Then we moved on to our town history. Until that time not one single teacher, nor any other person in my life ever explained to me that Franklin was SPECIAL. Our Franklin was the FIRST to be so named in the entire world, and that the collection of dusty books with the unreadable spines at the library was a "thank you" gift directly from Benjamin Franklin himself! Horace Mann is the father of public education in America and he was born in Franklin? This is amazing! I learned that history does not have to be like some distant strangers that you have to struggle to relate to, it can be like friends and family and home.

I definitely would not have guessed that less than ten years later I would be working at the library and spending the next 40 years researching the early history of the town, and all aspects of the library! But in all my years of research, it's only been in the last two years that I've turned my focus to *the books*. I knew why the town received them, I knew how and when they were received, but I had absolutely no idea what they were about, other than topics of religion, philosophy, and government. This booklet is the result of my deep dive into the mysterious (to me!) waters of Enlightenment literature. I've done my best to explain the content and any context as to why these titles were chosen for a small farming community in rural Massachusetts called Franklin. — *Vicki Buchanio Earls*

A Short History...

The process of creating new towns was well established in Colonial Massachusetts. Settlements such as Plymouth, originally conceived as having only the vaguest of western borders, gradually spawned one new town after another from this great tract of land. Separate incorporation was ultimately sanctioned, or not, by the General Court and usually required a clear desire amongst those separating to do so and satisfaction among those in the town giving up its area that, at the very least, assets and debts were fairly apportioned. Wrentham itself had been amicably set off from its 'mother town,' Dedham, in 1673.

With travel time and difficulty in attending worship services the residents of the western areas of Wrentham began petitioning for a separation. This was



not immediately granted. They earned the privilege of having their own meeting house through which municipal and church affairs were periodically rotated. Finally, in 1737, amidst continued dissatisfaction, the General Court granted the area a 'second' precinct status but not full municipal separation. The Second Precincts independence would wait for another 39 years.

On February 27, 1778, a draft of the petition for the incorporation of a new town was submitted to the Massachusetts legislature. It was to be named Exeter, as most of the town's inhabitants came from Exeter in Devonshire, England. As it was a draft, many changes were made by the slash of a pen, all minor, except for one – a change in the proposed name. Above the now inked out "Exeter" was written the town's newly chosen name of "Franklin". On March 2, 1778, the Massachusetts General Court approved the incorporation, establishing Franklin as the first municipality to take the name of the celebrated founder of the new nation.

But why "Franklin"? By this time there were many great national heroes to choose from, including George Washington. Nineteenth-century Franklin historian, Mortimer Blake speculated that it was Benjamin Franklin's diplomatic prowess, and the signing of the Treaty with France on January 6, 1778 that prompted the unexpected change. But news of the Treaty was still on March 2nd when the vote of incorporation occurred.

The true reason for the town's founders honoring Dr. Franklin is explained in this letter, dated January 15, 1784, to Benjamin Franklin from his nephew, Boston merchant Jonathan Williams, Sr.

Honored Sir

I hope you will excuse me, for the Liberty I take in advising you, of the Town of Franklin, and how it Came to be thus Named, apart of the people of wrentham which Town was too Large, a parish of 40 years Standing prefered a petition to the General Court 1778 at the very time, that we or they, heard that you was Assasinated, in Commeration of Doctr Franklin the people there unanimous, in Nameing there Town by the Name of Franklin, which Name and Person they highly Esteemed.

In 1778, Benjamin Franklin was deep into his diplomatic mission in France, which, on the surface, did not seem particularly dangerous—nightly soirées with the Parisian rich and famous, an audience with the King at Versailles, intellectual salons with philosophers & scientists—but behind all of these social events were the negotiations for money, soldiers, and munitions from the French to support the Revolution. The British ambassador to France, Lord Stormont, was keenly aware of this and his network of spies were watching Franklin's every move.

Whether it was British propaganda to demoralize the American colonies, or an actual plan that was never executed we may never know, but the rumor of an assassination attempt on Benjamin Franklin was on it's way to Boston at the exact same time as the Articles of Incorporation for the new town of "Exeter" was on it's way to the Massachusetts General Court.

A Letter from Bourdeaux of December 12, thentians, That the illustrious Patriot Dr. Benjamin Franklio, has been affaffinated in his Bed-Chamber, at the Instance of Lord Stormont. The Villain life him for dead; but one of the Doctor's Ribs revented the Stab from being instantly fatal, and le lay in a languishing Condition when the Vessel hill that brings this Account.

[Boston Gazette, February 13, 1778]

A Letter from Bourdeaux of December 12 mentions, That, the illustrious Patriot Dr. Benjamin Franklin, has been assassinated in his Bed-Chamber, at the instance of Lord Stormont. The Villian left him for dead; but one of the Doctor's Ribs prevented the Stab from being instantly fatal, and he lay in a languishing Condition when the vessel sail'd that brings this Account.

Upon hearing this terrible news, the town's representatives made the impulsive, but heartfelt decision to memorialize the fallen patriot by changing "Exeter" to "Franklin".

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The most important building in any Colonial New England town was the meetinghouse. That's where the citizens gathered for everything, including Sunday worship. Six years after its founding, the growing Town of Franklin was building a new meetinghouse, and that meetinghouse needed a bell, so the crossing of paths of some prominent Franklin citizens with Benjamin Franklin's nephew was very fortuitous, indeed. Jonathan Williams' 1784 letter to his uncle Benjamin continues:

...the Town or people are Now about Boulding a New Meeting House, and I find they would Bould a Stepel if they had a prospect of Getting a Bell. I happn'd to be in Company with two of the most respect abled of the Committe, they Express a wish that Doctr Franklin Would present them a Bell, as it would be received by the Town from him in preference to anybody in the World. I find the house is to be 60 foot Long, 42 foot Wide, about 26 foot high. Franklin Town is 25 Miles from Boston in the Way to providence - as I don't know whether you will think proper to take Notice of this Letter therefore I Shall Say Nothing about it. We are Well my Love to Benny. I am as Ever Your Dutiful Nephew Jona Williams

Franklin, though, had other ideas. On March 18, 1785, he wrote to Dr. Richard Price, Welsh philosopher, mathematician, and close political and personal friend of Franklin's. This letter set in motion the creation and gift of a small library that would further seal the town's bond with Dr. Franklin.

Passy, Mar. 18. 1785. My dear Friend,

My Nephew, Mr. Williams, will have the honour of delivering you this Line. It is to request from you a List of a few good Books to the Value of about Twenty-five Pounds, such as are most proper to inculcate Principles of sound Religion and just Government. A new Town in the State of Massachusetts, having done me the honour of naming itself after me, and proposing to build a Steeple to their Meeting House if I would give them a Bell, I have advis'd the sparing themselves the Expence of a Steeple at present, and that they would accept of Books instead of a Bell, Sense being preferable to Sound. These are therefore intended as the Commencement of a little Parochial Library, for the Use of a Society of intelligent respectable Farmers, such as our Country People generally consist of. Besides your own Works I would only mention, on the Recommendation of my Sister, Stennet's Discourses on personal Religion, which may be one Book of the Number, if you know it and approve of it. With the highest Esteem and Respect, I am ever, my dear Friend, Yours most affectionately B Franklin

Religion & just Government, I ment Jour in the Monthe Nate of Mafine his fatts, having some me the dona framing ight of he was proposing to build a Shaple to their Meeting How for if I would give theme a Bell I have advised the sparing thomselves the Expense of a Mappe at prefert, and that they would occupt of Book. water of a Bell Sough being proferable to Sound Price created a list and the library, which contained the works of the period's most renowned thinkers, including those of Dr. Price himself, arrived in Franklin sometime in June of 1786. Benjamin Franklin received an effusive letter of thanks from the town's pastor, Nathanael Emmons, on behalf of his parishioners:

Franklin June 22d. 1786.

We beg leave to present to your Execellency, our most grateful Acknowledgments, for the very handsom Parish Library, which You have been pleased to bestow upon the Minister and the Parishioners of this Town, as a particular mark of your approbation and regard. This choice and valuable Collection of Books, your Excellency will permit us to say, not only flatters our Understanding and Taste, but displays the brightest feature in your great and amiable Character. We only regret, that Modesty should deny us the celebrated Productions of the greatest Phylosopher and Politician in America. Since Providence hitherto hath delighted to smile on all your great and noble Efforts, we cannot but hope, your generous exertion to diffuse useful and divine Knowledge among us, will be productive of the happiest effects, and completely answer your warmest wishes. May all the seeds of Science, which You have sown in this, and various other parts of the world, grow up into a living Laurel, to adorn your illustrious Head in the Temple of Fame. And, in the meantime, may the sincere and affectionate Esteem of this Town, as well as the accumulated Honours, which You have merited and received from the united Republics of Liberty and of Letters, serve to smooth the last Passages of your eminently useful and important Life. We have the honour to be, with the deepest Gratitude and Respect, your Excellency's most obliged, and most obedient, humble Servants.

By Order, Nathanael Emmons Hezekiah Fisher The newly established Franklin Library had a bumpy start. Rev. Emmons strongly believed that the gift of books was meant for the parishioners of the Congregational Church, not for all of the citizens of Franklin. Four years and many contentious town meetings passed before Emmons would agree to circulate the books to all Franklin residents. He would maintain possession of the books, and they would reside in a bookcase along side the parish library in the front room of the Reverend's home, Franklin gift of books circulating to everyone, parish library for church members only. America's first free lending library was finally established in the year 1790.

Author's note:

As of this writing, no copy of the original list created by Price has been found, and the only record that exists is a pamphlet, published in 1812—a catalog of both the Franklin donation and the parish library. This is likely the creation of Rev. Nathanael Emmons, although no author is listed. After more than twenty years of handling, the two libraries most certainly became intermingled, and neither list is entirely accurate. In fact, several of the books listed as part of the Franklin donation were published several years *after* its arrival in 1786.

Both Richard Price and Nathanael Emmons were intelligent, highly educated men, both were clergymen and both dedicated to their respective religions. Richard Price was a Unitarian minister at a time when Unitarianism was outlawed in Great Britain. Nathanael Emmons was a Puritan minister, and his religious beliefs would have been antithetical to those of Dr. Price.

When Benjamin Franklin requested a Selection of books that are "most proper to inculcate Principles of sound Religion and just Government" the two men may not have agreed on what would constitute "sound religion", and some of the books listed in the catalog of the Franklin Library seem an unlikely choice for Richard Price. There are only a handful of titles listed as part of the Franklin donation that we can be certain are correct, several books authored by Richard Price that he himself donated in addition to the books purchased by Benjamin Franklin, and a book entitled "Discourses on personal religion" by Samuel Stennett which was suggested by Franklin's sister, Jane Mecom, in this October 1784 letter she wrote to her brother:

Dear Brother

I propose to Send this by the Marquis La Fayette He is Much Honored and Caressd among us....

I observe in won of your Leters to cousen Williams your Intention to Present to Franklin Town a number of Books as a Foundation for a Parish Library hopeing the Franklins will Prefer Sense to Sound, I can doubt but such a Library will consist of some Authers on Divine Subjects I therefor hope you will not think it too Presuming in me to Propose won, Viz Discourses on Personal Religion in two Volumes by Samuel Stennett D D Printed in London by R Hett in 1769 I borrow'd them and Read them with a grat deal of Pleasure and I think you your self would if you could find time tho there may be many things in them not altogether Agreable to your Sentiments, which I sopose may be the case with Every Volume you Read on any Subject.

The works of Richard Price and Stennett's Discourses have survived the test of time and are still part of the library's collection.

The Books

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A CATALOGUE of those Books in Franklin Library, which belong to the Town.

This Library was founded A. D. 1786,

Clark's Works, No. 1 2 3 4
Hoadley's Works, No. 5 6 7
Barrow's Works, No. 8 9
Ridgeley's Works, No. 10 11
Lock's Works, No. 12 13 14 15
Sydney's Works, No. 16
Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, No. 17 18
Blackstone's Commentaries, No 19 20 21 22
Watson's Tracts, No. 23 24 25 26 27 28
Newton on the Prophecies, No. 29 30 31
Law on Religion, No. 32
Priestley's Institutes, No. 33 34
Priestley's Corruptions, No. 35 36
Price and Priestly, No. 37
Lyndsey's Apology, No. 38
Lyndsey's Sequel, No. 39

Abernethy's Sermons, No. 40 41 Duchal's Sermons, No. 42 43 44 Price's Morals, No. 45 Price on Providence, No. 46 Price on Liberty, No. 47 Price's Sermons, No. 48 Price on the Christian Scheme, No. 49 Needham's free State No. 50 West & Lyttleton on the Refurrection No. 51 Stennet's Sermons, No. 52 53 Addison's Evidences, No. 54. Gordon's Tacitus, No. 55 56 57 58 59 Backus's Hiftory, No. 60 Lardner on the Logus, No. 61 Watts's Orthodoxy and Charity, No. 62 Brainerd's Life, No. 63 Bellamy's true Religion, No. 64 Doddrige's Life, No. 65 Bellamy's Permission of Sin, No 66 Fordyce's Sermons, No. 67 Hemmenway against Hopkins, No. 68 Hopkins on Holinels, No. 69 Life of Cromwell, No. 70 Fulfilling of the Scriptures, No. 71 Watts on the Passions, No. 72 Watts's Logic, No. 73 Edwards on Religion, No. 74 Dickinson on the five Points, No. 75 Christian History, No. 76 77

Prideaux's Connections, No. 78 79 80 81 Cooper on Predeffination, No. 82 Cambridge Platform, No. 83 Stoddard's Safety of Appearing, No. 84 Burkett on Personal Reformation, No 85 Barnard's Sermons, No. 86 Shepard's Sound Believer, No. 87 History of the Rebellion, No. 88 Janeway's Life, No. 89 Hopkins's System, No. 90 91 American Preacher, No. 92 93 94 95 Emmons's Sermons, No. 96 Thomas's Laws of Massachuseus, No. 97 American Constitutions, No. 48 Young's Night Thoughts, No. 99 Pilgrims Progress, No. 100 Ames's Oration, No. 104 Spectators, No. 102 103 104 105 166 107 108 109 Life of Baron Trenk, No. 110 111 Cheap Repository, No. 112 113 Moral Repository, No. 114 Fitch's Poem, No. 115 Erlkine's Sermons, No. 116

Author's note:

Like the American Revolution itself, these books were born during an intellectual and philosophical movement known as the Enlightenment (1685-1815). This movement sought to apply scientific methods of inquiry and discovery to the fields of law, religion, economics, and politics. Enlightenment scholars believed that such thinking could produce societies that were more equitable, just, and not beholden to the unchecked power of monarchs and religious leaders. American political and intellectual leaders such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson used the Enlightenment principles—including liberty, equality, and individual rights— to craft the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Works of some of the Enlightenment's greatest thinkers

were included in the books selected by Richard Price, including John Locke, Joseph Priestley, and Baron de Montesquieu.

Dr. Richard Price (1723-1791)

The Franklin Library: Titles and Descriptions

***most likely from the parish library

The Works of Samuel Clarke, D. D. Late Rector of St James's Westminster (1738) 4 vols.

Samuel Clarke, (1675-1729) was widely acknowledged as the most important philosophical mind of his generation in Britain and his influence ranged well beyond. Voltaire admired him as a veritable thinking machine who ranked with Locke and Newton as the great thinkers and writers of the age. Clarke's altered, Nontrinitarian revision of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer continues to influence worship among modern Unitarians.

The Works of Benjamin Hoadly, D.D.(1773) 3 vols.

As a Whig and a latitudinarian (no preference for any particular form of worship), Bishop Benjamin Hoadly of Bangor (1676-1761) was a persistent critic of any and all things Tory. His sermon "The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ," preached before King George I in 1717, effectively arguing that the Church of England lacked real moral authority. Hoadly's works condemn the exercise of church authority over an individual's conscience

The Works of the Learned Isaac Barrow, D. D., Late Master of Trinity-College in Cambridge: Being all his English Works in three volumes, 3rd ed. (1716) vols 1 & 2.

Isaac Barrow, (1630-1677), English classical scholar, theologian, and mathematician who was the teacher of Isaac Newton. He developed a method of determining tangents that closely approached the methods of calculus, and he first recognized that what became known as the processes of integration and differentiation in calculus are inverse operations. He wrote many important treatises on mathematics, but in literature his place is chiefly supported by his sermons, which are masterpieces of argumentative eloquence.

Ridgeley's Works ***

Thomas Ridgeley, (1667-1734) English Puritan noted for his famous exposition of the Westminster Larger Catechism, *A Body of Divinity* (1731).

The works of John Locke, in four volumes. 8th ed. (1777) John Locke (1632-1704) was an English philosopher whose works lie at the foundation of modern philosophical empiricism and political liberalism. He was an inspirer of both the European Enlightenment and the Constitution of the United States. His philosophical thinking was close to that of the founders of modern science, especially Robert Boyle, Sir Isaac Newton, and other members of the Royal Society. His political thought was grounded in the notion of a social contract between citizens and in the importance of toleration, especially in matters of religion. Much of what he advocated in the realm of politics was accepted in England after the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89 and in the United States after the declaration of independence in 1776.

The Works of Algernon Sydney (1772)

At the time of the American Revolution, Algernon Sidney (1623 –1683) was the world's most celebrated martyr for free speech. Executed by England's King Charles II, largely on the basis of the anti-royalist views he expressed in his *Discourses Concerning Government*, Sidney became a hero to the Whig opposition in England and to American critics of executive power. For the American founders, men like John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, Sidney's life represented resistance to tyranny just as his death dramatized the need for legal protection of individual conscience.

Joseph Priestley's The History of the Corruptions of Christianity (1782) 2 vols.

Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), a nonconformist English minister, scientist, and political theorist, wrote prolifically and was a notable figure of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. In the second half of the eighteenth century, a group of British scholars and writers began to challenge the governmental and religious settlement that had arisen out of England's "Glorious Revolution" of 1689. These reformers protested the limited nature of representation and the principle of religious uniformity within the British system. Priestley became a leading figure among these thinkers, who came to be called the friends of America, and his writings had a major influence on the First Amendment principles of religious liberty in the U.S. Constitution. In An History of the Corruptions of Christianity, Priestley claimed that the doctrines of materialism, determinism, and Socinianism (Unitarianism) were consistent with a rational reading of the Bible. He insisted that Jesus Christ was a mere man who preached the resurrection of the body rather than the immortality of a nonexistent soul.

Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion by Joseph Priestly [1774]

Unfortunately, this title is no longer part of the collection, so the actual edition date is unknown. The Institutes, was published as part of a series of works on religious education. Priestley's major argument is that only revealed religious truths which conform to the truth of the natural world should be accepted. Because his views of religion were deeply tied to his understanding of nature, the text's belief system rests on the argument for intelligent design.

Richard Price and Joseph Priestley: A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism (1778)

The Free Discussion between Richard Price and Joseph Priestley originated as a correspondence between the two after the publication of Priestley's Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit, his most important philosophical work (1777). At the time it was thought remarkable that a controversy such as this could be conducted so amicably, but then the two were close friends. Nevertheless their philosophical, as opposed to their often mentioned political views, were at opposite ends of a spectrum.

The Apology of Theophilus Lindsey, M.A.on Resigning the Vicarage of Catterick, Yorkshire (1782)

Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808) was an English theologian and clergyman who founded the first avowedly Unitarian congregation in England, at Essex Street Chapel. Lindsey's 1774 revised prayer book based on Samuel Clarke's alterations to the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* inspired over a dozen similar revisions in the succeeding decades, including the prayer book still used by the United States' first Unitarian congregation at King's Chapel, Boston.

A Sequel to The Apology on Resigning the Vicarage of Catterick, Yorkshire. By Theophilus Lindsey, M.A.(1776)

John Abernethy's Discourses Concerning the Being and Natural Perfections of God (1757)

John Abernethy (1680-1740) was an Irish Presbyterian minister and church leader. Trained at Glasgow and Edinburgh, he became minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Antrim in 1703. In 1718 he refused the Irish Presbyterian Court's appointment to a Dublin congregation-an unprecedented exercise of independent judgment which led to a division between "Subscribers" and "Non-Subscribers." The latter, led by Abernethy, were excommunicated in 1726. From 1730 he ministered in Wood Street, Dublin. Abernethy asserted that terms of Communion, fixed in the New Testament, do not include subscription to humanly devised confessions of faith, and he opposed the exclusion of men from the service of the state on religious grounds. His published works include *Discourses concerning the Being and Natural Perfections of God.*

Dr. Duchal's Sermons (1765) 3 vols.

James Duchal (1697–1761) was an Irish Presbyterian minister (Non-Subscriber), he replaced John Abernathy in Antrim when Abernathy was moved to Dublin. Abernethy's intellectual and spiritual authority shaped Duchal's career, and many years later Duchal described Abernethy as 'that astonishing man'. Duchal undertook responsibility for editing and publishing the works of his predecessor John Abernethy; they appeared in three volumes (1748–51), with an introductory biographical sketch, and helped increase awareness of Abernethy's beliefs.

A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals by Richard Price, D.D. F.R.S. (1769)

Richard Price (1723-1791) was a Welsh moral philosopher, Nonconformist minister and mathematician. He was also a political reformer, pamphleteer, active in radical, republican, and liberal causes such as the French and American Revolutions. He was a close friend of Benjamin Franklin and silent co-founder of the Franklin Public Library. Dr. Franklin gave the funds for purchasing the books, but he asked his friend Richard Price to select titles that would be appropriate for the townsfolk of Franklin. In addition, Price donated several of his own books to the collection. The *Review of the Principal Questions in Morals* contains Price's theory of ethics.

Four Dissertations by Richard Price (1778)

On Providence, On Prayer, On the Reasons for Expecting That Virtuous Men Shall Meet After Death in a State of Happiness, On the Importance of Christianity.

Price tackles some of the most foundational questions of Philosophy and religion—providence (divine care), prayer, and the nature of happiness.

Two Tracts on Civil Liberty, the War With America, and the Debts and Finances of the Kingdom by Richard Price (1778)

Price was a keen supporter of both the American and French revolutions. In early 1776 he published Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, followed by Additional Observations in the next year. In 1784 he added Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution. Price's support of the colonies earned him the friendship of many of the leading figures in the rebellion, including Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, and Paine.

Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution by Richard Price (1785)

This tract on America first appeared in 1784. Defining the right of American colonists to oppose British corruption, it suggested that their independence would offer much 'benefit to the world'. But it also offered a relatively rare critique of the system of racial slavery that continued to develop in America. Reissued here is the 1785 publication that also contained translations from French of a letter to Price by the economist Turgot and a parody by Charles-Joseph Mathon de la Cour which had amused Benjamin Franklin.

The EXCELLENCIE of a Free-State: or, The Right Constitution of a Commonwealth by Marchamont Nedham (1767) Marchamont Nedham (1620-1678) was a journalist, publisher and pamphleteer during the English Civil War who wrote official news and propaganda for both sides of the conflict. He was author of *The* Case of the Commonwealth of England Stated (1650) and The Excellencie of a Free State (1656). His pamphlet The Excellencie of a Free State foreshadowed the thinking of the radical Whigs of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and was much appreciated in America. Nedham's dictum that "the people are the best keepers of their own liberties" was a point of emphasis and some contention between John Adams and James Madison in the Founding period. "The proposition that the people are the best keepers of their own liberties is not true. They are the worst conceivable, they are no keepers at all; they can neither judge, act, think, or will, as a political body." - John Adams.

Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Gilbert West (1785)

Gilbert West (1703–1756) was a minor English poet, translator, and theologian in the early and middle eighteenth century. Samuel Johnson included him in his *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*. In the 1740s, while studying at Oxford, West and the Baron George Lyttelton set out together to disprove two major events in Christian history: Saul's conversion and the Resurrection. After a year of painstaking research, each eventually concluded that Saul was genuinely converted and Jesus genuinely rose from the dead, and they became Christians.

Discourses on Personal Religion by Samuel Stennett, D.D. (1772) 2 vols.

Samuel Stenett (1727-1795) was a Seventh Day Baptist minister and hymn writer born in Exeter, England. Includes "The Nature of Religion", "The Reality of Religion". "The Sameness of Religion", "The Importance of Religion", "The Difficulties Attending Religion", et al. This title is significant because it was added to our library from a suggestion by Franklin's sister, Jane Mecom.

The Evidences of the Christian Religion by Joseph Addison (1776)

Although he was a celebrated playwright during the 18th century, Joseph Addison (1672-1719) is mostly remembered for his perfection of the English essay as a genre in his magazine, *The Spectator. The Spectator* would publish short papers on philosophical, theological, or other topics meant to start lively discussions among its readership. In 1712, Addison wrote his most famous work of fiction, a play entitled *Cato*, *a Tragedy*. Some scholars believe that the source of several famous quotations from the American Revolution came from, or were inspired by, Cato. These include: "Give me Liberty or give me death!" and "I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." Addison left The Evidences of the Christian Religion, along with other essays, unfinished upon his death at the age of 47.

The Spectator: Volume the Second by Joseph Addison & Richard Steele (undated)

The Spectator was a daily publication founded by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in England, lasting from 1711 to 1712. Each "paper", or "number", was approximately 2,500 words long, and the original run consisted of 555 numbers, beginning on 1 March 1711. These were collected into seven volumes. The paper was revived without the involvement of Steele in 1714. The Spectator had many readers in the American colonies. In particular, James Madison read the paper avidly as a teenager. It is said to have had a big influence on his world view, lasting throughout his life. Benjamin Franklin was also a reader, and the Spectator influenced his style in his "Silence Dogood" letters. Franklin writes in his autobiography "About this time I met with an odd volume of the " Spectator." It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my "Spectator" with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them"

The works of Tacitus. With political discourses upon that author, by Thomas Gordon, Esq (1770) 5 vols.

Thomas Gordon (abt.1690-) was a radical Whig who did not see liberty as a privilege, but rather as a natural right. Gordon used the history provided by Tacitus to write about the dangers of factions, the evils of tyranny, the natural right of liberty, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and the power of the people, among other subjects that further defined radical Whig thought and would eventually define the American Revolution. Gordon's Tacitus was considered sacred to many of the American Founders.

Backus' History [Isaac Backus?][1777?]***

This volume has been lost to time, and is no longer in the collection. The brief title is all that we have left of this book. I believe this book to be A History of New-England, with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists by Isaac Backus (1724-1806). Born in Norwich, Connecticut, Backus was a leading Baptist minister during the era of the American Revolution who campaigned against state-established churches in New England. He worked to keep the issue of separation of church and state before the general public; and in 1774 he traveled to Philadelphia with other Baptists to seek assistance from the First Continental Congress.

A letter written in the year 1730, concerning the question, whether the logos supplied the place of an human soul in the person of Jesus Christ by Nathaniel Lardner [1759]
Nathaniel Lardner (1684-1768) English Presbyterian minister

Orthodoxy and Charity United in Several Reconciling Essays on the Law and Gospel, Faith and Work by Isaac Watts, D.D. (1749)

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)was a dissenting English Congregational minister, theologian, philosopher, hymn writer and poet. He was also a prominent educator whose textbooks and educational theory were republished in Britain and America for more than a century.

An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd [abt 1749]***

In 1749 Jonathan Edwards published "An Account" drawn from Brainerd's extensive diaries and supplemented by Edwards's own commentary. Born in Haddam, Connecticut, Brainard was an itinerant preacher and missionary to the Native American population of Western Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In 1747 he became sick with tuberculosis, and died in Northampton, Massachusetts at the home of his good friend, Jonathan Edwards.

True religion delineated; or, Experimental religion, as distinguished from formality on the one hand, and enthusiasm on the other, set in a scriptural and rational light by Joseph Bellamy (1750)***

Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790) was an American Congregationalist pastor and a leading preacher, author, educator and theologian in New England in the second half of the 18th century. Of his 22 books, the best known was *True Religion Delineated*, from which he gained a high reputation as a theologian and was reprinted several times both in England and America. His influence on the religious thought of his time in America was probably surpassed only by that of his teacher, Jonathan Edwards.

Four Sermons On The Wisdom Of God In The Permission Of Sin by Joseph Bellamy (1758)***

Born in Cheshire, Connecticut, Bellamy became an itinerant Congregationalist preacher, who preached the traditional Puritan belief that an abundance of material possessions corrupted the soul. He also believed in original sin and the role of God in granting salvation and limiting free will. Out of his home in Bethlehem, Connecticut, he operated the first theological school in America (1738), educating such famous students as Aaron Burr and Jonathan Edwards II.

Life of Doddridge [1750s]

The first few pages of this book are missing, so the author & publication date cannot be determined from the book itself. Phillip Doddridge (1702-1751) was born in London, the last of twenty children. His parents died when he was very young, and his guardian squandered his inheritance, leaving him destitute at thirteen years old. He was taken in by Presbyterian minister Samuel Clarke. Doddridge became a Dissenting/Nonconformist minister (protestant who did not conform to the Church of England) and he founded a Dissenting Academy in Northampton, England in 1719 with Samuel Clark's support. The Doddridge United Reformed Church was the site of the ministry of Doddridge from 1729 to 1751. In 1972 it became the United Reformed Church and still exists today on Doddridge Street in Northampton.

Fordyce's Sermons [1766?]

As this title is no longer in the collection, we can only guess its details. I believe it to be Sermons to Young Women by Rev. James Fordyce (1720–1796). Fordyce was a minister in the Church of Scotland. In 1760, he moved to London and became one of the most famous preachers in the city. In these sermons Fordyce instructs women to be dutiful, submissive and modest in dress and behavior: 'Meekness, cultivated on Christian principles, is the proper consummation, and highest finishing, of female excellence'. Women should also be sensitive: the 'better kind of woman' will 'melt into tears at the sight or hearing of distress'. At the same time, they should appear as elegant and attractive as possible, since beauty is a gift from God. Sermons was immortalized by Jane Austen in her novel Pride and Prejudice (1813). The character of Mr Collins chooses Sermons to Young Women to read aloud to the Bennet sisters on the first evening that he spends with the family. This is an important clue to Mr Collins's character, since by the time Jane Austen wrote Pride and Prejudice, Fordyce's views were outdated and restrictive. Lydia Bennet is particularly unimpressed by Mr Collins's choice of reading material: 'Lydia gaped as he opened the volume, and before he had, with very monotonous solemnity, read three pages, she interrupted him ...'. In A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft strongly criticizes Sermons for Young Women. She objects to Fordyce's suggestion that the highest reward for female virtue is male attention. She also objects to his belief that if a husband becomes indifferent, it is because his wife is insufficiently submissive and forgiving.

It's difficult to determine to which collection this book belongs. On the one hand, Richard Price and Mary Wollstonecraft were very close friends and Price agreed with her views on women's rights. On the other hand, this book was a very popular and

Fordyce was famous, so maybe...but probably not.

A Vindication of the Power, Obligation, and Encouragement of the Unregenerate to Attend the Means of Grace Against the exceptions of the Rev. Mr. Samuel Hopkins, in the second part of his reply to the Rev. Mr. Mills; intitled, "The true state and character of the unregenerate, stripped of all misrepresentation and disguise." by Moses Hemmenway (1772)***

Moses Hemmenway (1735-1811) Congregational minister, was born in Framingham, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard University in 1755 where he was a classmate of John Adams. An Old School Calvinist, Hemmenway was critical of the theology of the New Divinity developed by the followers of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), particularly Samuel Hopkins -1803) and Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790). He was also critical of Edwards' metaphysics and revivalism. Though he appreciated him, Hemmenway believed that Edwards' idea of self-love led to errors about human nature. Hemmenway published a handful of works, mostly based on sermons. A number of criticisms were directed against Hopkins, whose views on church membership Hemmenway found too restrictive. In this regard, Hemmenway showed the influence of the Halfway Covenant. He believed that the visible church should consist of the saved and unsaved, and that the church did not have the right to require more than external holiness and orthodox theology for membership.

An Inquiry into the Nature of True Holiness by Rev. Samuel Hopkins (1773)***

Religious tract published in Newport, Rhode Island, where Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) served as pastor of the First Congressional Church. After studying for the ministry under the tutelage of Jonathan Edwards, he obtained a position as pastor in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. While serving at Great Barrington, Hopkins published two major theological works that made him the leader of an innovative hyper-Calvinist movement within New England Congregationalism, a movement that was referred to as the New Divinity or Hopkinsianism. Its doctrinal positions (God does not merely permit sin; He wills it into existence for good ends) and its concept of immediate conversion (a tenet that seemed to diminish the importance of the means of grace-namely prayer, Bible reading, and church attendance) prompted increasing criticism, especially from Hopkins's own congregation. After his dismissal from Great Barrington, he moved to Newport, Rhode Island and became the pastor of Newport's First Congregational Church. In Newport he not only continued to develop the New Divinity and formulated his doctrine of disinterested benevolence, a radical selflessness for the glory of God and the good of humankind.

The Fulfilling of the Scripture, or An Essay Shewing the Exact Accomplishment of the Word of God by Robert Fleming (1743)

Robert Fleming (1630 -1694) was a Scottish Presbyterian Minister. Following the Restoration of King Charles II, he declined to accept the authority of the newly imposed bishops in the Church of Scotland. In 1677, Robert Fleming was appointed as a second minister to the Scottish Church in Rotterdam, Netherlands.. Fleming had strong roots in the Scottish Reformation. His stepmother was the eldest daughter of John Knox. He studied at St. Andrews under Samuel Rutherford and departed for Rotterdam after being ejected as a minister in Scotland. Fleming was best known for his book, The Fulfilling of the Scripture Complete, first published in Rotterdam in 1669. In this book Fleming demonstrated how the Scriptures foretold what God would accomplish in his providence.

The Spirit of Laws by De Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1773) 2 vols.

Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu (1689-1755) Described in *The Federalist* as "the celebrated Montesquieu," he was more often consulted and cited in the period stretching from 1760 to 1800 than any other secular author — especially with regard to the institutions most likely to sustain political liberty and to the evils of slavery. In particular, Montesquieu's discussion of separation of powers and checks and balances profoundly influenced the American Founders and the design of the U.S. Constitution.

Commentaries on the Laws of England by William Blackstone (1783) 4 vols.

William Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England was the first legal treatise to comprehensively describe the common law as it existed in England in the mid-eighteenth century. The Commentaries originated as a series of lectures Blackstone delivered at Oxford University. The lectures were extremely popular, leading Blackstone to publish the Commentaries in four volumes from 1765 to 1769. Commentaries offer a comprehensive examination of English law, from constitutionalism to common law. Although Blackstone was heavily influenced by John Locke's work, he found the concept of revolution troubling and acknowledged a right to revolution only in theory, contending that power returned to the people only when sovereign power had been utterly destroyed. Thus, as long as Parliament existed, its power remained absolute, a doctrine known as parliamentary sovereignty. Although the leaders of the American Revolution necessarily rejected Blackstone's views on popular sovereignty and the right to revolution, the framers of the Constitution found themselves returning to Blackstone's analysis of legal principles in developing a system to govern the former colonies.

A Collection of Theological Tracts by Richard Watson, D.D. F.R.S. (1785) 6 vols.

Richard Watson (1737–1816) was an Anglican bishop and academic, who served as the Bishop of Llandaff from 1782 to 1816. He wrote some notable political pamphlets. In theology, he belonged to an influential group of followers of Edmund Law that also included John Hey and William Paley. Watson was known for his strong views as a supporter of the American Revolution, a defender of religious tolerance, and an advocate of fairer distribution of church revenues.

Dissertations on the Prophecies, which have remarkably been Fulfilled, and at this time are Fulfilling in the World by Thomas Newton (1777) 3 vols.

Dr. Thomas Newton (1704-1782) was an English Anglican theologian, clergyman, biblical scholar, author, biographer, bishop, and Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London.

Considerations on the theory of religion by Edmund Law, Lord Bishop of Carlisle (1774)

Edmund Law (1703-1787) was a vicar in the Church of England. The work by which he is perhaps best known, *Considerations on the State of the World with regard to the Theory of Religion*, was published by him at Cambridge in 1745. The main idea of the book is that the human race has been, and is, through a process of divine education, gradually and continuously progressing in religion, natural or revealed, at the same rate as it progresses in all other knowledge. In his philosophical opinions he was an ardent disciple of John Locke.

The Doctrine of the Passions by Isaac Watts [1770?]

Watts defines the passions as the felt response that comes as we appreciate the characteristics of an object—if an object is unusual we feel surprise, if it is beautiful we feel desire, if it is dangerous we feel fear.

A Short Critical Review of the Political Life of Oliver Cromwell by John Banks [1741?]***

John Banks (English Playwright). The first few pages are missing, so there is no publication information.

The following titles have sadly been lost to time and are no longer part of the existing collection:

A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections by Jonathan Edwards [date unknown]***

A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections is a publication written in 1746 by Jonathan Edwards describing his philosophy about the process of Christian conversion in Northampton, Massachusetts, during the First Great Awakening, which emanated from Edwards' congregation starting in 1734.

The True Scripture-Doctrine Concerning Some Important Points of Christian Faith by Jonathan Dickinson [1741]***

Jonathan Dickinson, (1688-1747), Born in Hatfield, Massachusetts, died in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, was a prominent Presbyterian clergyman of the American colonial period and the first president of Princeton University. Written during the height of the First Great Awakening in America, Dickinson's *True Scripture* is widely considered one of the first and most important texts on Calvinism in a uniquely American context. The author defends the doctrine of original sin, predestination, and justification and extends a clarion call for repentance. Dickinson explains the role of Christ's sacrifice in the conversion of sinners and lays stress upon the sufficiency of Christ for the sanctification of believers.

The Christian History by Thomas Prince [1740s], 2 vols.*** Thomas Prince (1687-1758), was born in Sandwich, Massachusetts, and became a Congregational minister. After spending two years ministering in the West Indies and England, he returned to Massachusetts and became co-pastor of Boston's Old South Church, where he remained until his death forty years later. Thomas and his wife were active in the Puritan social life of Boston. In the 1740s, Thomas was a strong supporter of the revival movement known as the Great Awakening. He invited the English evangelist George Whitefield to preach in Boston and became a leading "New Light," cheering on the revival. In 1743 he established The Christian History to report on the revivals sweeping America and Europe. The Christian History ran only two years. However, Thomas Prince was so influential that Prince Street and Princeton, Massachusetts were named after him.

Note on George Whitefield - Benjamin Franklin was a fan of Whitefield's exciting and ear splitting sermons, and went so far as to design an experiment testing the efficacy of Whitefield's loud voice as well the truthfulness of reports that claimed that he had preached to tens of thousands of people at one time in the fields of England. One day while at the back of a large crowd which had gathered to hear Whitefield in Philadelphia, Franklin began to walk backwards until he could no longer hear the sermon. From there he calculated a semicircle and, estimating two square feet per person, he calculated, at least to his own curiosity, that Whitefield could be heard by as many as 30,000 people.

The Old and New Testament Connected, In the History of The Jews and Neighboring Nations by Humphrey Prideaux [1750s], 4 vols.

Humphrey Prideaux (1648-1724) was an English churchman and orientalist (outdated term for the study of the history, languages and cultures of the East), Dean of Norwich from 1702. His sympathies inclined to Low Churchism (less emphasis on ceremony, vestments, and sacraments) in religion and to Whiggism in politics. Prideaux's goal was to provide readers with a better understanding of the historical contexts of the Old and New Testament.

The Doctrine of Predestination unto Life, Explained and Vindicated by William Cooper [1740?]***

William Cooper (1694-1743) was born in Boston and was a graduate of Harvard in 1712. In 1737 he was chosen to the presidency of Harvard, but declined it. He participated actively in the great revival of 1740, and said, toward the close of his career, that "since the year 1740 more people had sometimes come to him in concern about their souls in one week than in the preceding twenty-four years of his ministry." This is a collection of four sermons preached to the Brattle Street Church in Boston by Cooper, who served from his ordination in 1716 until his death in 1743.

The Cambridge Platform of Church Discipline***

The Cambridge Platform is a statement describing the system of church government in the Congregational churches of colonial New England. It was written in 1648 in response to Presbyterian criticism and in time became regarded as the religious constitution of Massachusetts. The document was shaped most directly by the thinking of Puritan ministers Richard Mather and John Cotton.

The Safety of Appearing at the Day of Judgment by Solomon Stoddard (1742)***

Solomon Stoddard (September 27, 1643, baptized October 1, 1643 – February 11, 1729) was the pastor of the Congregationalist Church in Northampton, Massachusetts Bay Colony. Stoddard significantly liberalized church policy while promoting more power for the clergy, denouncing drinking and extravagance, and urging the preaching of hellfire and the Judgment. The major religious leader of what was then the frontier, he was known as the "Puritan Pope of the Connecticut River valley". Stoddard was the grandfather of the influential American revivalist preacher, Jonathan Edwards.

The Poor Man's Help, and Young Man's Guide (Burkett on Personal Reformation) by William Burkett (1725)

William Burkitt (1650-1703) was the son of an ejected Puritan minister, Burkitt became a reformed clergyman of the Church of England. Burkitt wrote books that were among the most widely read in Britain and North America during the first century after his death.

Janua Coelestis, or The Mystery of the Gospel in the Salvation of a Sinner by John Barnard (1750)***

John Barnard (1681-1770), the long-time minister of Marblehead, Massachusetts, took the traditional path toward becoming a Congregational minister by attending an English school, grammar school, and then Harvard College, the main supplier of the region's clergy and integral to its intellectual life. While Barnard held traditional providential beliefs in God's responsibility for events, his life history also revealed an increasing layer of newer scientific beliefs and values.

The History of the Late Rebellion in Great Britain by John Marchant (1747)

[Jacobite Rebellion, 1745-1746]

The sound believer. A treatise of evangelical conversion. Discovering the work of Christ's spirit, in reconciling of a sinner to God by Thomas Shepard (1742)***

Thomas Shepard (1605-1649) was a Puritan minister, born in Towcester, near Northampton, in Great Britain, November 5, 1605. Persecuted for his religious beliefs he made his escape to New England in 1635, settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts and became the minister of the First Church in Cambridge.

Invisibles, Realities, Demonstrated in the Holy Life and Triumphant Death of Mr. John Janeway by James Janeway (1742)

James Janeway (1636-1674), was an English Puritan minister and author who, after John Bunyan (Pilgrim's Progress), had the widest and longest popularity as the author of works read by English-speaking children. His book, *A Token for Children*, was first published in 1671–72. Janeway wrote it to help spread his religious message and save children from Hell. He wanted to provide examples from the lives and 'joyful deaths' of children so that the reader could learn how to reach Heaven. Janeway believed that every child was born sinful and had to accept God, and live a pious life, in order to earn salvation.

Ames' Oration [1796?]***

This is no longer in the collection, and there is no other information on this book other than the title. It is likely to be the work of politician and skilled orator, Fisher Ames (1758-1808) of Dedham, Massachusetts, who served in the first four federal Congresses and was a leader of the New England Federalists. (published after 1785)

The Life of Baron Frederick Trenck: Containing His Adventures, and Cruel and Excessive Sufferings During an Imprisonment of Ten Years in the Fortress by Baron Trenck [1786]

Friedrich Freiherr von der Trenck (1726-1794) was a Prussian officer, adventurer, and author. (published after 1785)

Cheap Repository Tracts; Entertaining, Moral, and Religious by Hannah More [1795], 2 vols.***

The *Cheap Repository Tracts* consisted of more than two hundred moral, religious and occasionally political tracts issued in a number of series between March 1795 and 1817, and subsequently reissued in various collected editions until the 1830s. They were devised by Hannah More (English religious writer, best known as a writer of popular tracts and as an educator of the poor.) and intended for sale or distribution to literate poor people, as an alternative to what she regarded as the immoral traditional broadside ballad (printed ballads on recent crimes, executions, or disasters) and chapbook (cheaply produced pamphlet of ballads & poems sold by street peddlers) publications. More was noted for her political conservatism, being described as an anti-feminist, a "counterrevolutionary", or a conservative feminist. Cheap Repository Tracts proved to be enormously successful with more than two million copies sold or distributed during the first year. (published after 1785)

Moral Repository, 1 vol.

[Possibly another volume of Cheap Repository?]

Fitch's Poem [Elijah Fitch? (1745-1788). The Beauties of Religion. A Poem, Addressed to Youth] (published posthumously, Hopkinton, Mass., 1789)***

Sermons By The Late Reverend And Learned Mr. Ralph Erskine, Minister Of The Gospel At Dunfermline by Ralph Erskine [1815]

Ralph Erskine (1685-1752) was a Scottish minister. His works consist of sermons, poetical paraphrases and gospel sonnets.

The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan [1678 & 1684] John Bunyan was born in near Bedford, England in 1628 and as a teenager, he joined Cromwell's New Model Army. Under the rule of Oliver Cromwell Bunyan became a popular preacher and author. After the Restoration, in 1660, Bunyan was arrested for preaching without official permission from King Charles II and would spend the next 12½ years in Bedford County Jail., where he would write his epic Christian allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In 350 years it has never gone out of print and is still considered the bestselling book of all time.

Further reading:

Mortimer Blake, *History of the Town of Franklin, Mass*. (Franklin, MA: Committee of the Town, 1879).

Vicki Buchanio Earls, "What's in a name? Benjamin Franklin and the Birth of a New Town in Revolutionary America", *The New England Journal of History*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (Spring 2023), 31-55.

Ritchie Robertson, *The enlightenment: The pursuit of happiness, 1680-1790.* New York, NY: Harper, 2021.

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