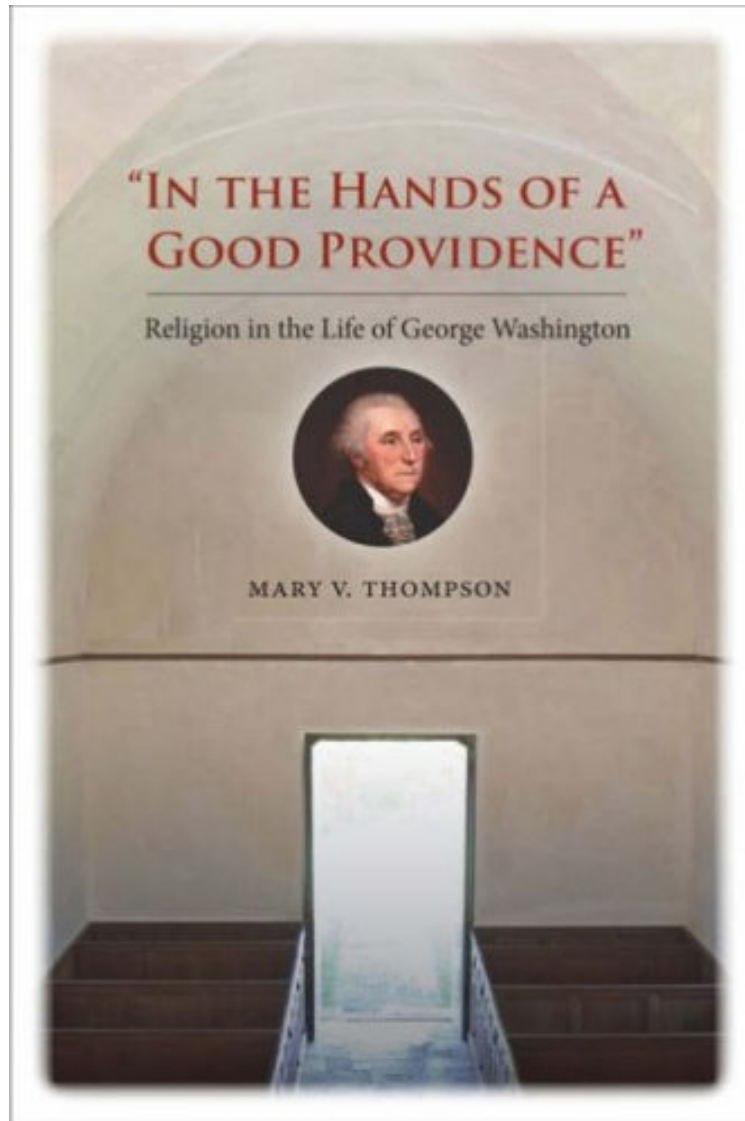


[PDF] "In the Hands of a Good Providence": Religion in the Life of George Washington

## "In the Hands of a Good Providence": Religion in the Life of George Washington

Mary V. Thompson

ebooks / Download PDF / \*ePub / DOC / audiobook



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#1905077 in Books University of Virginia Press 2008-10-09 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.24 x .98 x 6.54l, 1.24 #File Name: 0813927633272 pages | File size: 54.Mb

**Mary V. Thompson** : "**In the Hands of a Good Providence**": **Religion in the Life of George Washington** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised "In the Hands of a Good Providence": Religion in the Life of George Washington:

28 of 28 people found the following review helpful. Honest discourse on George Washington's faith By Richard M. Lim For all that we know about George Washington, his faith has remained a mystery. The main reason for this is

Washington himself, whose natural reticence is no more apparent than in the matters of his soul. Sifting through his papers for evidence of his beliefs is a daunting task, but Ms. Thompson does an admirable and evenhanded job and sheds new light on an old subject. She provides the proper context for Washington's beliefs by exploring the religious environment in which he lived - 18th century Virginian Anglicanism. To those who claim Washington was not a Christian she counters than they provide a narrow definition for Christianity, namely a modern-day evangelical Christian. She posits that Washington was a Christian who saw his actions as a statement of faith, rather than mere words. He supported the Church, was a regular churchgoer, was familiar with the Bible since childhood, bought dozens of Christian sermons, took the oath as a Godfather eight times, and was a constant donor to charities. Ms. Thompson is in a unique position to address this issue with her extensive familiarity with Washington's papers as the Research Historian at the Collections Department of the Mount Vernon. She brings to light many of Washington's early writings which demonstrates his familiarity with the Bible and contains references to Christ. Does she claim to know the exact state of Washington's soul? No, she humbly answers... but the preponderance of evidence points to a self-effacing Christianity. 18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Unbiased, superb testament of Washington's faith

By Anonymous  
Written by Mount Vernon researcher Mary V. Thompson, this book is a quintessential answer to the question "Was George Washington truly a Christian?" Thompson allows Washington to speak for himself by quoting his letters, speeches, and orders extensively throughout this book. She places Washington's faith in the context of the times, by not only detailing what the Anglican low-church was like, but by illustrating the faiths of his friends, associates, and family. The Christianity of George Washington, as concluded in this book, was not the evangelical kind of later generations, nor was it the Deistic kind of his peers. Instead, Washington's religious temperament was very much like his personality: reserved but profound. He participated in church life, serving as a vestryman, he gave money to many different churches, donated to charities, read and purchased religious books for his library and his wards, attended services as frequently as was normal, encouraged the spread of Christianity, and sought to establish a nation that was founded on religious sentiments, not just Christian, but of any faith. Other highlights include a discussion of the changes in Washington's religious beliefs, his attending many different churches, his work with the Indians, and the religious/moral basis of freeing his slaves. This book was exhaustively documented from mainly primary sources which provides infallible support. My only complaint was that people were frequently introduced by describing their relationship to Washington, then later their names were provided. However, this book seems to be intended for an audience quite familiar with Washington so this is not really an issue. Overall, I was inspired by Washington's appeal for religious toleration but also a personal adherence and obligation to one's own religion. I felt like I became acquainted with Washington because I read his own words, and this book was transportive in that I felt as if I was actually in early America. An engaging, unbiased, indispensable look at religion in the life of the Founding Father. 12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. HISTORY AT ITS BEST

By strategos  
I recently obtained a copy of this book to use for a paper I am writing on the topic of George Washington's religion. As far as I am aware, it is the only work besides "George Washington Religion" by Paul F. Boller (1963) that focuses exclusively on Washington's religious beliefs. Of the two, I found this one to be the superior book. The conclusions were better supported, and important evidence was brought to light that Boller either overlooked or chose not to include. This book included significant original research and insightful interpretations. For example, many historians have searched in vain for evidence that George Washington engaged in regular Bible study. In the absence of a "shout it from the rooftops" declaration from Washington himself on the subject, they have concluded that Washington was a deist or a luke-warm Christian at best. Thompson took a very different approach, first by including eyewitness accounts from Tobias Lear about Washington's family bible study, then by investigating the books and artwork present in the Washington household. Finally, she identified numerous Biblical references in Washington's personal letters, many of which are so obscure that someone unfamiliar with the Bible could hardly have written them. As a Christian, I have long believed that Washington was not a deist. As a student of history, I wanted to know the unbiased truth. Thanks to this inspired work, I have been able to reconcile these previously conflicting beliefs.

Attempts by evangelical Christians to claim Washington and other founders as their own, and scholars' ongoing attempts to contradict these claims, are nothing new. Particularly after Washington was no longer around to refute them, legends of his Baptist baptism or secret conversion to Catholicism began to proliferate. Mount Vernon researcher Mary Thompson endeavors to get beyond the current preoccupation with whether Washington and other founders were or were not evangelical Christians to ask what place religion had in their lives. Thompson follows Washington and his family over several generations, situating her inquiry in the context of new work on the place of religion in colonial and postrevolutionary Virginia and the Chesapeake. Thompson considers Washington's active participation as a vestryman and church warden as well as a generous donor to his parish prior to the Revolution, and how his attendance declined after the war. He would attend special ceremonies, and stood as godparent to the children of family and friends, but he stopped taking communion and resigned his church office. Something had changed, but was it Washington, the church, or both? Thompson concludes that he was a devout Anglican, of a Latitudinarian bent,

rather than either an evangelical Christian or a Deist. The meaning of this description, Thompson allows, when applied to eighteenth-century Virginia gentlemen, is far from self-evident, leaving ample room for speculation.

"No one interested in Washington's religion should overlook this well-written and well-researched monograph." - Thomas Taylor, Wittenberg University --Church History, Volume 79, Number 4 (December 1, 2010), pp. 944"...an excellent look at the place of religion in the life of this most reticent of men." - Mary Coleman, Hartford Seminary -- s in Religion Theology, Volume 17, Issue 2 (March 2010), pp. 158-159"On the whole, Thompson handles her source material with commendable care...." - Edward G. Lengel, senior editor of the Papers of George Washington --Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Volume 118, Number 1 (January 2010), pp. 72-74"Both the general public and historians will find this to be an important book...." - Edward L. Bond, Alabama AM University --The Journal of Southern History, Vol. LXXVI, No. 3 (August 2010), pp. 701-702"...a thought-provoking book...lets its historical subjects speak for themselves...." - Whitney A. Martinko --The Virginia Quarterly, Vol. 85, No. 2 (April 2009)From the Back Cover"The vexed topic of George Washington and religion has longcried out for an accomplished scholar with a cool head and a sure hand, and Mary V. Thompson is exactly that person. She has given us a searching study that is wise, sensitive, and deeply researched and that will stand as the authoritative work on the subject for many years to come." - Ron Chernow, author of The House of Morgan; Titan; and Alexander Hamilton"This book will transform the debate over George Washington's religion for some years to come. The author situates George Washington in the religious tradition extending from his ancestors to the generations that succeeded him; uncovers evidence about his own religious formation and the formation he tried to pass on to the younger generation. Thompson brings forth new data and rich material, in the context of which she places claims of earlier writers about his religion. She shows unusual sensitivity to religion in Virginia in Washington's time." - Michael Novak [co-author of Washington's God: Religion, Liberty, and the Father of Our Country]About the AuthorMary V. Thompson is Research Historian in the Collections Department of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.