Religion and the Founding of the American Republic
https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel07.html

Sections:

Religion and the New Republic

The religion of the new American republic was evangelicalism[1], which, between 1800 and the Civil War, was the "grand absorbing theme" of American religious life. During some years in the first half of the nineteenth century, revivals (through which evangelicalism found expression) occurred so often that religious publications that specialized in tracking them lost count. In 1827, for example, one journal exulted that "revivals, we rejoice to say, are becoming too numerous in our country to admit of being generally mentioned in our Record." During the years between the inaugurations of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, historians see "evangelicalism emerging as a kind of national church or national religion." The leaders and ordinary members of the "evangelical empire" of the nineteenth century were American patriots who subscribed to the views of the Founders that religion was a "necessary spring" for republican government; they believed, as a preacher in 1826 asserted, that there was "an association between Religion and Patriotism." Converting their fellow citizens to Christianity was, for them, an act that simultaneously saved souls and saved the republic. The American Home Missionary Society assured its supporters in 1826 that "we are doing the work of patriotism no less than Christianity." With the disappearance of efforts by government to create morality in the body politic (symbolized by the termination in 1833 of Massachusetts's tax support for churches) evangelical, benevolent societies assumed that role, bringing about what today might be called the privatization of the responsibility for forming a virtuous citizenry.

---

[1] Evangelical: adjective: of or according to the teaching of the gospel or the Christian religion.
• of or denoting a tradition within Protestant Christianity emphasizing the authority of the Bible, personal conversion, and the doctrine of salvation by faith in the Atonement.
• zealous in advocating something.

noun: a member of the evangelical tradition in the Christian Church.

THE CIRCUIT PREACHER.—Drawn by A. R. Waud.—[See Page 648.]